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An examination of the development and nature of professional identity in
five Early Years Professionals/ Early Years Teachers in England - a
phenomenological study

by

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Abstract

This research project investigates the lived experience of professional identity of five Early Years Teachers, formerly Early Years Professionals (EYPs), working in a variety of early years settings in England. Early Years Teacher Status is a government-funded, standards-based graduate status for the birth to five sector, which replaced Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) in 2013. All EYPs are now entitled to call themselves Early Years Teachers. Both are part of a continued drive to professionalise the early years workforce, raise outcomes for children from birth to five and ensure children are ready for school. Concerns have been raised in the sector about the parity of pay, working conditions and status of Early Years Teachers when compared to those with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS).

The research study uses an in-depth phenomenological approach and an innovative data gathering method, Learning Walks, to investigate how five EYPs, rebranded as Early Years Teachers, have made meaning of their new identity while working in a variety of early years settings: a pre-school, children's centre, home child-minding setting, Higher Education and nursery. Issues of identity, pedagogical leadership, power, agency and status are examined through the perspectives of the participants using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The findings emphasise the unique experiences of these Early Years Teachers, which are contextual to their workplace and influenced by personal experience and belief systems. Their confidence in a multi-disciplinary pedagogical approach is very visible, embedded within their previous identity as an EYP. However, the study underlines some of the tensions, issues and challenges which come from an imposed shift of professional identity from EYP to teacher, without the same pay and working conditions as QTS, and situated within a traditionally complex and marginalised workforce beset by notions of hierarchy and status. It provides new insight into the reality of such an abrupt, imposed and regulated identity change within a shifting policy field, which is reconceptualising early years education and care as preparation for school.

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Glossary and Explanation of Terms

CAF	Common Assessment Framework
CCQT	Children's Centre Qualified Teacher
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CWDC	Children's Workforce Development Council
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DfE	Department for Education
DfES	Department for Education and Science
ECAT	Every Child a Talker
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
ECERS	Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale – Revised
ECM	Every Child Matters
ECS	Early Childhood Studies
ECSDN	Early Childhood Studies Degree Network
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage
EYP	Early Years Professional
EYPS	Early Years Professional Status
GLF	Graduate Leader Fund
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
ITERS	The Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale
LW	Learning Walk
NCSL	National College for School Leadership

NCTL	National College for Teaching and Leadership
NLEY	New Leaders In Early Years
NPQICL	National Professional Qualification for Integrated Centre Leadership
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education
PSED	Personal, Social and Emotional Development
PVI	Private, Voluntary and Independent
QTS	Qualified Teacher Status
SIP	Setting Improvement Partner
TA	Teaching Agency
TACTYC	Association for Professional Development in Early Years
TDA	Training and Development Agency for Schools
TF	Transformation Fund
UCET	Universities' Council for the Education of Teachers

Clarifying situational use of language

This research relates only to England, since Early Years Professional Status and Early Years Teacher Status are initiatives restricted to England. Individual terms in common use within an international context such as teacher, practitioner, early years, day-care, childcare, early childhood care and education, child minding and pre-school are defined and contextualised when used. In many European countries formal schooling does not start until the age of seven, therefore the term pre-school means something entirely different from the way it is used in England, where children generally start compulsory schooling in reception classes at four. The use of the term ‘teacher’ is certainly a contested one in this international context. In England ‘teacher’ usually refers to a graduate with QTS, whereas in other countries it may have a more generalised use as someone who works with children but is not necessarily qualified at graduate level.

Early Years Professional Status is commonly referred to by the acronym of EYPS. However, when Early Years Teacher Status was introduced, government directives made it clear that this should not be referred to as EYTS, as it was important to use the word ‘teacher’ in its entirety. Throughout this thesis, EYPS appears as an acronym while Early Years Teacher Status is written in full.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This research project uses a phenomenological approach as both a methodological and theoretical frame to examine how five participants, who achieved Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) and subsequently became rebranded as Early Years Teachers following a change in government policy (DfE, 2013b), experienced and made meaning of their new roles and how this impacted on their sense of professional identity. Both these graduate-level government initiatives reflect an increasing international focus on the importance of early childhood and an acceptance that positive intervention in the lives of young children can have long term effects on their health, education and social development, which can persist well into adulthood (Fleer et al., 2009; Reynolds et al., 2010; Field, 2010; OECD, 2006, 2012; Ready Nation, 2015). This has been constructed and represented as an economic benefit; investment in the youngest children, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, gives a higher rate of return than investment made later in childhood or adult life (Heckman, 2008; Eurydice, 2009, 2015; Gertler et al., 2012; Britto, 2013; Doyle et al. 2013; Smith, 2015). The role of a well-qualified and professional early years workforce in improving outcomes for children has become a key part of this discourse (Sylva et al., 2004; Sylva and Pugh, 2005; OECD, 2012; OMEP, 2015).

Early Years Professional Status and Early Years Teacher Status - the background.

Traditionally, the early years' workforce in England has been viewed as strong on vocation or 'passion', but poorly paid and under-qualified (Moyle, 2001). A succession of government initiatives was introduced to both upskill and professionalise the workforce during the Labour administration of 1997-2010 and the Coalition government of 2010-15. Both EYPS and its successor, Early Years Teacher Status, were essential elements in this overall initiative. This process of professionalisation was inevitably challenging, given the diverse nature and complexity of predominantly privately provided early years provision, the disparate discourse and debate in the sector about the suitability of various models of professionalism and qualification and the changing impetus of government policy and associated funding because of ideological shifts and financial constraints. As a result, no other profession appears to have been subject to such change in such a short time (Chalke, 2013).

EYPS was launched in 2006 by the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) as a graduate status comparable with that of a teacher (CWDC, 2006a) to professionalise the birth to five workforce and drive up quality. It was originally constructed as a holistic, multi-professional, graduate pedagogical leadership role, requiring candidates to show competence against 39 standards (CWDC, 2007), later reduced to 12 in 2012 (TA, 2012, see Appendices 2 & 3). Although considerable government funding was invested in this new status, the programme was discontinued in 2013 during a period of complex policy change. EYPS was superseded by Early Years Teacher Status, awarded through the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) and based on the achievement of professional competence against 12 standards (NCTL, 2013b), (see Appendix 3), in order to align the role more towards that of a teacher. The 11,000 existing EYPs (DfE, 2013) were re-named and re-branded as Early Years Teachers without further need for additional qualification or experience. However, although Early Years Teacher Status includes the term Teacher, it does not confer Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) or give equivalent professional recognition, pay and conditions, a cause of concern in the sector (ECDN Response, 2015).

The Research Context

This research study has its roots in my experience at a university in the south of England as Programme Director for EYPS and later as Project Director for New Leaders in Early Years (NLEY). The latter was a pilot programme which included EYPS and was designed to attract high achieving graduates to the sector, during the time of this transition from EYPS to Early Years Teacher Status. I not only experienced the policy change at first hand as a programme deliverer, but also became fascinated by the rationale and discourse accompanying the re-alignment of the role of EYP to a teaching model. What was troubling was the impact this seemingly straightforward change of title, in policy terms, might actually be having on existing EYPs. I wanted to reposition myself beyond the policy statements and regulatory edifices and try to understand what it was really like for them; how they were experiencing their new, re-branded identity as Early Years Teachers in a sector with such disparate working and employment practices, pay and conditions (Lloyd, 2012a).

Although Early Years Teacher Status enables graduates to be employed in the birth to five sector, few early years settings are situated in mainstream schools. The majority are part of a privately funded and voluntary sector, characteristically made up of different

types of settings including day-care centres, nurseries, playgroups, pre-schools, children's centres, childminders and maintained schools. In the privately funded and voluntary sector, pay, employment practices and conditions of work are generally decided locally by employers (Rodd, 2006), whereas the maintained sector has a more established and coherent approach to pay and conditions, particularly for those with QTS. The recent marketisation approach gives Academies more choice in both who they employ and in setting conditions of employment, providing further complication. Hence, the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) workforce is a 'complex organism' in which to construct a professional identity (Chalke, 2013:213).

This study sets out to explore how these new Early Years Teachers experienced a sense of professional identity after this abrupt and enforced transition from EYP to Early Years Teacher. Research on professional identity in teachers with QTS is well-documented (e.g. Beijaard et al., 2004; Day et al., 2006). However, although there is specific research on professional identity in EYPs (Lloyd and Hallet, 2010; Lumsden, 2012; Murray, 2013), Early Years Teacher Status is relatively new and as yet there is little research available indicating how this new role is actually experienced in practice. Rather than adding to the already extensive research on teachers with QTS, this study therefore aims to focus on experience of professional identity in EYPs/ Early Years Teachers. It is innovative because it looks specifically at the lived experience of participants during and immediately after the transition from EYPS to Early Years Teacher Status and it seeks to explore this experience through the individual voice and perspective of the participants themselves.

Professional Identity as a Concept

A particular interest was how the change of title affected participants' sense of professional identity. Concepts of professional identity have been the focus of research in many professional contexts in recent years, examined through a variety of theoretical concepts but often using a socio-cultural lens (Baxter, 2011). In such studies professional identity is constructed as a developing sense of self, which is dynamic rather than fixed and reflects both the personal, internal characteristics of the person involved and the social and contextual landscape within which their identity is constructed, for example their workplace (Ibarra, 1999; Cowin et al., 2013). This study takes a similar approach to professional identity formation in focusing on the interaction of personal, internal qualities and contextual situations (Butt, 1996 cited in Ross, 2005). However, it also recognises the central impact of regulatory initiatives in a government-

sponsored professionalisation agenda, which have the direct intention or side effect of forming or moulding professional identity through the creation of new job roles. This is further complicated in a sector with a traditional struggle for recognition, beset by marginalised and gendered discourses (Egan, 2004; Osgood 2006a; Miller and Cable 2008; Urban, 2010).

Moreover, investigations into professional identity are often focused on the broader early years workforce rather than explicitly on graduate members such as EYPs (McGillivray, 2008; Dyer and Taylor, 2012; McMahon and Dyer, 2014; Lightfoot and Frost, 2015). As previously noted, professionalism and identity in teachers with QTS has been the subject of extensive research (Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop, 2004; Day et al., 2006; Swann et al., 2010) but few studies focus specifically on professional identity in Early Years Teachers because of the timescale since its introduction. This study therefore seeks to shed light on how professional identity is experienced in this newly created role from the perspectives of five participants working in diverse areas of the early years sector.

Methodological Approach

Studies about professional identity often use interpretative, qualitative approaches to investigate the experiences of participants, with data gathered through interviews, professional discussions or questionnaires, utilising content analysis to extract themes or analyse consistencies from data (Baxter, 2011). I wanted something more than this; a much more detailed and situated record of the individual lived experience of my participants, seen from their own perspectives. In this investigation, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is used (Smith et al., 2009). IPA draws on the basic tenets of phenomenology as articulated by Husserl, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty (Smith et al., 2009). Additionally, it integrates social cognition theory and practice from psychology to make explicit, to understand and to interpret the lived experience of each participant through a process of double hermeneutic interpretation (Smith et al., 2009). In this way, IPA provides both a methodological and theoretical framework to this study. It seeks to uncover and interpret how the participants make meaning and sense of events in their life experience, the ‘unfurling of perspectives and meanings which are unique to the person’s embodied and situated relationship with the world’ (Smith et al., 2009, p.21), rather than merely drawing conclusions and generalisations from that experience. However, this does not preclude opportunities to seek

commonalities or differences in that experience. The process of hermeneutic interpretation can also identify both elements of experience that may be common to all participants and areas of dissonance between participants.

Interviews are a common method used to gather data in qualitative research. However, in IPA interview data is usually participant-led, supplemented by contextual information and meticulously transcribed and interpreted. This research investigation builds on the IPA approach using Learning Walks, an innovative method of gathering data in the participants' workplace. Learning Walks are an assessment tool used to determine quality or competency-based standards (Campbell, 2011). In this research, the concept of a Learning Walk has been adapted to become a walking research interview, led by the participant and including natural interactions and occurrences; the participant demonstrates and explains their situated experience as the researcher encounters and experiences it.

The use of IPA as a methodology and a theoretical framework is set out in detail in the methodology chapter but also referred to throughout the thesis, following accepted protocols for IPA (Smith et al., 2009). The theoretical framework is not set out separately, as it is fully integrated with the methodological approach. IPA has its own challenges, not least for the researcher using it for the first time and I found the process to be both deeply engaging and deeply challenging in equal measure.

Research Questions

This investigation examines the development and nature of a professional identity in Early Years Professionals (EYPs)/Early Years Teachers in England using a phenomenological approach. My initial research questions originally related to EYPs only, but following the renaming of EYPs as Early Years Teachers I adapted and revised my questions to encompass the changing policy field, in line with conventions of qualitative enquiry.

1. How can professional identity be defined in Early Years Teachers, originally EYPs, and how does the acquisition of EYPS /Early Years Teacher Status contribute to the construction of a professional identity?

2. What part do workplace context, relationships, knowledge, skills, status, power and agency play in the construction of this professional identity?
3. How do EYPs /Early Years Teachers perceive and experience their professional identity in their working practice and how does EYPS/Early Years Teacher Status influence their pedagogical choices?

Structure of the Thesis

As it is argued that the changing policy context has had a direct impact on participants' sense of identity through the specific creation of job roles, the second chapter of this thesis examines the changing policy context in some depth, providing a backdrop, frame of reference and context to the research investigation. It highlights some of the conflicting and convoluted twists and turns of policy direction.

The third chapter reviews some current understanding of the field as evidenced in literature and research and highlights some of the key debates and discussions around notions of professionalism, professional identity, pedagogical leadership and situational agency. Chapter Four presents IPA as the most appropriate methodological approach and highlights some of the issues and limitations accompanying its use (Smith et al., 2009). A reflexive discussion of researcher involvement and researcher voice is an essential part of this.

The findings in Chapter Five are presented in the style of IPA, with the rich data of the Learning Walks shown and interpreted using a five-stage model proposed by Gee (2011). Chapter Six is a discussion and composite interpretation, drawing out themes related to existing research and literature. In Chapter Seven, a reflexive section engages with some of the learning from the use of phenomenology in such a project; and finally, conclusions are drawn about the research as a whole and recommendations made for future practice.

Chapter 2: Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) to Early Years Teacher Status – A Changing Policy Context

Phenomenology is often used most effectively when focusing on participants who are experiencing some kind of major life event or change in their circumstances, as it seeks to uncover how they make sense of what is happening to them (for example, Mason, 2012; Denovan and Macaskill, 2013). In this chapter, the development and trajectory of the changing government policy that gave rise to EYPS and its replacement, Early Years Teacher Status, is examined to contextualise the transitionary process which frames the research investigation. Although the study began in 2011, interviews with participants took place from 2013 -14 following the re-naming of EYPs as Early Years Teachers in the ‘shifting landscape’ (DfE, 2013a) of government policy.

The construction of the roles of EYP and its successor Early Years Teacher are inevitably central to any discussion of professional identity in participants. It can be argued that their identities as an EYP, later Early Years Teacher, were initially at least, a product of regulatory envisioning, which included defined standards and laid down assessment processes. It is therefore appropriate to understand how and why this newly created profession of EYP became superseded so relatively quickly by another in order to reach an informed appreciation of the situational and perspectival experience of participants (Smith et al, 2009), how they saw themselves in relation to others and how they made meaning of this. Although an extensive discussion of all the complexities of this process is interesting in itself, space does not permit a detailed examination of the twists and turns of this process.

International and National Context for Early Intervention

Intervening early in children’s lives is increasingly seen as part of the development of human social capital worldwide (OECD 2006; CED, 2013; Ready Nation, 2015). There may be agreement that there should be greater public investment in the youngest children, especially those from disadvantaged families, through the opportunity to attend ‘quality learning programs in childcare and pre-school settings’ (Policy Brief, 2006, p.3), but the form this investment should take is contextualised. In the UK, Scandinavia, Australia and New Zealand, a focus on the provision of quality in early childhood care and education is seen both as a public good (OECD 2006) and intimately related to the qualifications of early years staff (Sylva et al, 2004). Scandinavian

Countries take a social pedagogic approach embedding concepts of social justice, while in New Zealand the Te Whariki curriculum is led by a graduate level workforce, with the intention of knitting together disparate sections of society (Dalli, 2008). Although the introduction in England in 2006 of EYPS (CWDC, 2006) was part of this overall investment in the youngest children, it was constructed in a different form to the approaches used in other countries.

EYPS was created within the complex and fractured context of early years provision after the Labour Government of 1997 placed early years services at the centre of policy as part of a family-focused social justice agenda (Cullen et al., 2013). It was not merely a reflection of the growing interest in early intervention internationally but also indicated issues specific to England, which at that time had some of the highest levels of relative child poverty in Europe (UNICEF, 2007; Waldfogel, 2010; Eisenstadt, 2012). Tackling unemployment and encouraging women into the workforce were seen as key to lifting children out of poverty and improving the economic situation of families in England. However, the existing split between care and education and the mixed economy of private and maintained early years provision made the implementation of any national strategy to provide sufficient good quality, affordable childcare places difficult (Ball and Vincent, 2005; Skinner, 2006; Lloyd, 2008). The complexity of this existing childcare market, much of which was profit making, aligned with state-funded provision, has been well documented (Lloyd, 2012a; Waldegrave, 2013; Lloyd and Penn, 2014). When EYPS was introduced in 2006, 80% of early years settings were privately owned, able to set their own pay, conditions, and often in direct competition with each other (Rodd, 2006). A lack of trained staff was a barrier to the implementation of the Ten Year Strategy (2004), which set out plans to address training, skills and qualifications in the early years workforce, and the initiative to extend free childcare places to two-year-olds from disadvantaged areas (NAO, 2004; Speight et al., 2010).

Quality in practice became closely aligned with workforce development (Urban, 2008) particularly after the Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE) project (Sylva et al., 2004) found that quality, measured in outcomes, was highest in pre-schools which had a trained teacher as a manager and a good proportion of teachers on the staff. This echoed research findings from the United States, which highlighted the long-term impact of early education programmes employing trained graduates, such as High

Scope and Perry (Waldegrave, 2013). A pedagogical relationship between workforce qualifications and quality was accepted uncritically and quoted frequently in government documentation (CWDC, 2006a) but while staff qualifications and training varied considerably across the Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) sector, nursery classes usually had a qualified teacher. Meanwhile the Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda (DfES 2003) required a new model of a practitioner working across professional boundaries to improve outcomes for children in the expanding Children's Centre provision, originally established in areas of social disadvantage, but rapidly extended to a more universal offer (Eisenstadt, 2011; Hryniewicz and Jackson, 2011; Jarvis et al., 2013). The traditional early years workforce in the private sector was mainly female, often part-time and low-paid (Hevey and Curtis, 1996; Moyles, 2001), with a poor career structure and working conditions and subject to maternalist discourses (Osgood, 2006a; Moss 2008; Cooke and Lawton, 2008). Patently, attempting workforce development in such a complex sector was challenging.

The Conception of the Role of EYPS

The introduction of EYPS indicated a move to both integrate and professionalise the children's workforce, reflecting government willingness to intervene in professions through regulating and standardising both professional qualifications and pedagogical approaches (Tobias, 2003; Sachs, 2003). Consultation with the sector (DfES, 2005), revealed definitions of professionalism to be elusive, with no clear collective view about the competences and skills which might make an early years professional (Dalli, 2006). It was argued in the sector that a qualification was needed which included in-depth subject knowledge of the early years combined with a postgraduate professional qualification; for example, an early childhood studies degree followed by QTS (Garrick et al, 2006). Boddy and colleagues (2006) drew on Foucauldian theory to call for a change from a childcare discourse to one of pedagogy, formulating a vision for an integrated early years workforce containing reflective and researching practitioner graduates with similar status to teachers. This social pedagogic approach, with an integrated care and education system from birth to five, was modelled on Sweden, although clearly there could be difficulties in transferring a model of social pedagogy to a country like England, unfamiliar with the structures, language and terminology of such a system (Petrie et al., 2012). In a clear policy statement, the Workforce Consultation document (DfES, 2005) noted that QTS had never been intended to give

candidates expertise in dealing with children from birth to 5 and called for 'graduate qualified early years professionals such as pedagogues or 'new' teachers' (p.25).

EYPS was set at graduate level, but the term 'teacher' did not appear in the title. The word 'professional' was used, echoing Morris's (2006) view that the term 'teacher' was inappropriate for the youngest children from birth to five as it implied a focus on teaching and learning before the introduction of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provided a more coherent framework across this age group (DCSF, 2008). The term 'professional' could bridge both care and education sectors. Its use was also a very explicit way of representing the process of professionalisation in the sector and giving greater significance and accountability to the status of EYP, reflecting how policy initiatives are always framed and presented through the choice of words and ideas used (Bown et.al., 2009). Nonetheless, there was little understanding that awarding formal recognition and status as a professional to one person within a setting draws the inevitable conclusion that those without the status may see themselves, and be viewed by others, as unprofessional (Lumsden, 2011; Hevey, 2013).

The system of assessment and award chosen by CWDC differed from QTS. Originally, EYPS was offered through four different pathways depending on the experience and working situation of candidates and was assessed against 39 standards (Appendix 1), using assessment processes drawn from performance models of professional training for medical staff. For example, performance in leadership, communication skills and decision-making were assessed through role-play and simulation rather than workplace evidence. These methods reflect the conflicting and contradictory nature of the structure and processes of EYPS. They highlight a lack of awareness of the operational difficulties in introducing a professional status in a predominantly private and voluntary sector containing few existing graduates who could model practice or mentor colleagues (CWDC, 2008).

EYPS was clearly intended to establish and maintain a benchmark standard across the disjointed early years provision in England, reflecting the contemporary government agenda of technicism, centralisation, standardisation and consistency (CWDC, 2006a; Osgood, 2010). Its introduction reflected an expanding power-base of those at CWDC who drew on different principles, discourses and models within this regulatory approach to professionalism, to design something 'transformational' to transcend the existing

fragmented issues in the sector and provide a new professional leader. The language used in the EYPS documentation was permeated by the buzzwords and soundbites of New Labour: change, new, transform, personalise, flexible, reflective (CWDC, 2006b). Koyama and Varenne (2012) are dismissive of policy assemblage by groups of people not ‘truly aware of the conditions of their implementation’ (p.161) and certainly the implementation and reception of EYPS at practice level, like many policies subject to different influences and obstacles on the ground (Ball, 2006; Ozga and Jones, 2006), proved problematic for several reasons.

EYPS and QTS: Different or Equivalent?

Although CWDC stated that ‘EYPS is a recognisable status equivalent to Qualified Teacher Status’ (CWDC, 2006b), it was never defined exactly how this might work in practice, in spite of requests for clarification from both the Universities’ Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET) and indeed CWDC themselves (Rogers, 2006; CWDC, 2006a). QTS was a threshold status giving a licence to teach. EYPS was a leadership status, yet there was no commensurate reward in terms of pay and conditions for the explicit leadership capability of EYPS. Clearly, there was a gulf between the construction of the status of a graduate leader and the perception of the role of an EYP by teachers, parents and local authorities. In general, EYPs earned far less than teachers; the Aspect survey (Willis, 2009) found that EYPs earned around £8-£9 an hour in comparison to £16.80 an hour (£18.97 in inner London) for a newly qualified teacher. The stated aim to have an EYP in every Children’s Centre by 2010 and in every setting by 2015 (DfES, 2005) was supported by a £250 million Transformation Fund (TF), and later a £305 million Graduate Leader Fund (GLF), which provided incentives to train and use EYPs. In spite of this financial support, it proved difficult for what were essentially small businesses to employ EYPs at a competitive rate.

Although EYPs were graduates with a professional status, there was no clear career structure, guaranteed pay structure or conditions of work set out for them (Miller, 2008a, 2008b; Calder, 2010; Roberts-Holmes, 2013). Lumsden’s (2011) call for a compulsory induction year and mandatory CPD reflected the chaotic and inconsistent approach to professional development experienced by graduate EYPs who had no entitlement to an induction year or consistent and graduate-appropriate CPD. This was particularly evident in view of the messy reality of the relationship between central and local government at this time (Atkinson, 2007), as LEAs were tasked with providing

networks of support for EYPs. The name itself proved awkward. Without an accompanying national marketing campaign to parents and settings to drive the message about EYPS, setting staff, parents and teachers in the Foundation Stage in schools were often unaware of the exact role of EYPs (Lloyd and Hallet, 2010; Lumsden, 2010; Davis & Barry, 2012).

Pedagogical Leadership in Practice

In spite of the financial incentives, EYPs were not wholly welcomed in the sector, particularly by Senior Practitioners, who were the product of previous government attempts to professionalise the sector (Cottle and Alexander, 2012). Full pathway EYPs from outside the sector were the subject of particular resentment as it was felt that they did not have the experience required to take a leadership role in practice (Wilkinson, 2009; Tivey, 2013). This contributed to a perception of EYPS as imposed, rather than organically developed, in a sector that had a traditional community of practice (Wenger, 1998) which reified a long-term apprenticeship approach to staff development and practice and was familiar with part-time competency based training, often in situ (Georgeson, 2009).

The construction of EYPs as pedagogical leaders or change agents, ‘expected to lead practice across the EYFS in a range of settings, modelling the skills and behaviours that promote good outcomes for children and supporting and mentoring other practitioners’ (CWDC, 2007, p.4) was not uniformly understood. This role was inhibited by the ‘strength of embedded traditional notions of leadership associated with hierarchy, power and authority’ (Murray and McDowall Clark, 2013, p. 291). EYPs were more influential in their own rooms than in other rooms in the setting, indicating that the concept of pedagogical leadership was not yet fully constructed (Mathers et al., 2011).

Although CWDC’s view was that the EYFS should be led by EYPs (CWDC, 2006a), the EYFS spans both the pre-compulsory and compulsory systems from birth to five, complicating this intention. Those working in the compulsory sector in schools were ineligible for funding for EYPS, which was administered through administered through CWDC from a specific funding stream, but those working in the pre-compulsory sector were not able to work in maintained schools without QTS. Tensions such as this tended to reinforce the historic divide between care and education (Osgood, 2012) and reflected

the inconsistencies in policies caused by the ‘competing priorities of different Departments in government’ (Powell, 2010, p.225).

Evidence demonstrated the positive impact of EYPs in practice; particular benefits were seen in language and literacy skills, scientific understanding and adult/ child interactions, the provision of developmentally appropriate daily structure and provision and planning for diversity and individual needs (Mathers et al., 2011; Hadfield et al., 2012). However, unsurprisingly, gains were almost wholly with pre-school children from three to five, rather than birth to three, since EYPs tended not to work with the younger children. Although the scale of these research projects were limited and mainly focused on those who had followed short pathways to EYPS, participants reported difficulties when there was no clearly defined role or remit for an EYP, particularly when they were not also managers in the setting. Some EYPs were confident about their leadership role and its connection with quality improvement, but the greatest improvements in practice occurred when the EYP had a role across the setting (Hadfield et al., 2012). Lumsden (2011) argues persuasively that at this time EYPs inhabited and led a new professional space, distinct from any other professional in the children’s workforce, positioned at the intersection of health, social care and education.

Professional to Teacher

Arguably, changes made to EYPS under the Coalition Government introduced chaos into a system which was beginning to make a positive difference in practice (Lumsden, 2011), illustrating policy assemblage as ‘always in the process of coming together and being territorialised just as it is always also potentially pulling apart and being de-territorialised’ (McCann and Ward, 2012, cited in Ureta, 2014.). Intervention in the early years was still seen as a robust and cost-effective way to improve whole-life outcomes (Field, 2010; Allen, 2011). Free childcare places for three to four-year-olds continued with a planned extension to places for disadvantaged two-year-olds in 2013. However, the principles of social justice and universal provision, which had informed the Labour government approach to the early years (Ball and Vincent, 2005), were replaced by targeted support for children and families from disadvantaged areas, underpinned by principles of social mobility. From April 2011, the GLF, specifically allocated to fund training and to support employers in paying higher salaries to EYPs, was no longer ring-fenced, but formed part of an Early Intervention Grant (EIG), to be

spent by local authorities in any way they thought fit. Without the GLF, settings began to find it difficult to pay for EYPs and local decisions meant some Children's Centres closed (Nursery World, 2014).

Amid concerns about the pay and career prospects for EYPs, the Tickell Report (2011) called for a recognised career and pay structure and a supportive and strong system of professional development in the sector. Allen (2011) argued that the Foundation years should have the same status and recognition as primary or secondary stages. Although recommending that all settings employ an EYP to focus on the social and emotional needs of babies and young children, Allen (2011) emphasised another policy concept of explicit preparation for school through the phrase 'school readiness, for all children regardless of family income' (p. xviii). The integrated and multi-professional approach to supporting children's development in the early years began to be replaced by a discourse about promoting child development in the 'Foundation Years' as critical to ensuring 'children aged five are ready to take full advantage of their next stage of learning.' (DfE/DoH, 2011:4). Conceptualising early childhood provision as delivering school readiness within a neoliberal discourse of accountability (Clark, 2013) became a building block in the move to Early Years Teacher Status. A concomitant policy shift saw Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) renamed as the Department for Education (DfE, May, 2010), signifying a change of emphasis to education (Shepherd, 2010). The requirement to have an EYP in every Children's Centre by 2010 and every setting by 2015 was quietly dropped.

Once the driving force behind the introduction of EYPS disappeared with the withdrawal of funding for CWDC on March 31st 2012 (CWDC closure letter, 2012), EYPS moved operationally to the Teaching Agency. This signalled an ideological move to the discourse and practice of teaching and education, reinforced by the merging of the Teaching Agency with the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) to make the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) in April 2013. There is no doubt that the constant changes in location and ownership of the EYPS programme at governmental level had a de-stabilising effect on the sector as a whole and led to deep concerns about the value of EYPS.

‘New Era EYPS’ 2012-14

The re-branding of EYPS as ‘New Era’ in 2012 (TA, 2012) may have reflected the positive evidence about quality in practice (Mathers et al, 2011; Hadfield et al, 2012; Davis & Capes, 2013), but it also encompassed changes in the standards and in assessment, which brought it more into line with teaching and moved it further away from the holistic, multi-professional, leadership model of the original EYPS. In her review of the early years workforce, Professor Cathy Nutbrown (2012) referenced the pervasive issues of status between EYPS and QTS, noting both the positive impact of graduate leadership and also the general levels of dissatisfaction she had heard from EYPs regarding their role, status and identity. In her view it was essential to have an early years specialist route to QTS for those working with children from birth to seven, possibly an Early Childhood Studies degree plus a PGCE, to enable those working in the early years to have real parity with teachers with QTS. ‘Having qualified teachers leading early years practice will raise the status of the sector, increase professionalism and improve quality’ (ibid, p.8). Such a model would also smooth the transition process into school and through into Key Stage 1.

Nutbrown’s recommendations were not wholly accepted in the government response, *More Great Childcare* (DfE, 2013b). Clearly co-production, or harnessing expertise from the sector (Lloyd, 2012b), was becoming less visible. Although the link between quality and qualifications was acknowledged, a ‘schoolification’ agenda is more visible in the expectation that children from birth to five should move into school settings and be taught by teachers. This change of policy to make it ‘easier for schools to offer provision to the under-threes... to see more school teachers teaching younger children’ (DfE, 2013b: 28, 39 - 40) challenged the conceptual basis of the specific role of the multi-professional, graduate leader in the sector.

The new standards (NCTL, 2013, Appendix 3) reflected the tensions of EYPS as a pedagogical leadership status in EYFS; these difficulties were acknowledged in the stated intention to ‘help to spread leadership practice’ and reference was made to ‘leadership for continuous improvement’ (NCTL, 2013b, p. 6). The pedagogical leadership role previously spread across all the standards became more focused on leading and modelling strategies and leading individual staff (NCTL, 2013b, pp. 2-5). The importance of working with parents and other professionals remained, but the pedagogical emphasis had moved to a conceptual teaching model through standards

permeated with references to group work, high expectations, good progress, outcomes, structured learning activities and managing behaviour. Although containing specific reference to phonic teaching, embedded constructions of learning through play are noticeably absent.

Early Years Teachers: 'Inspire the Future. Be an Early Years Teacher' (NCTL 2014)

Inconsistencies in policies arise when there are attempts to 'represent a combination of views and interests' (Powell, 2010, p. 225). It is worth returning to Bown et al.'s (2009) model for policy assemblage, which emphasises the influence of certain groups of people or individuals who coalesce at certain times in the lifetime of policy development, together with the key role of politicians who drive policy through ideology. The replacement of a Liberal Democrat, Teather, by Conservative Truss, as Minister for Children in 2012, both signalled and reinforced the new direction at DfE. *More Great Childcare* (2013), evidencing policy borrowing (Philips and Ochs, 2004) from the French *Écoles Maternelles*, shifted EYPS further away from a graduate professional occupying a space between care, health and education (Lumsden, 2012) to one embedded within an education model of school readiness (DfE, 2013). The recommendation to build on the strengths of EYPS by introducing a new Early Years Teacher Status from September 2013 initiated an uncomfortable transition during which the term 'teacher' was reframed and reinterpreted. Early Years Teachers were not teachers with QTS, but some strange hybrid which used the term 'teacher' to 'raise the status of the early years workforce' and 'give one title of "teacher" across the early years and schools', but did not confer QTS or its pay and conditions and career structure (DfE, 2013, p.2).

The construction of this new role, Early Years Teacher (NCTL, 2013b), is transparent in the responses to questions sent to NCTL, located clearly within a neoliberal market discourse. It is worth looking at these in some detail. 'Early Years Teachers will have Early Years Teacher Status, reflecting the specialist role that they have in working with babies and children from birth to five years... although there is a need to transform the status of the profession, we don't consider QTS necessary to do this' (NCTL, 2013c). Early Years Teachers were deemed to have equivalent status because they had

met the same entry requirements, and their status could be made equivalent to teaching, as Allen (2011) suggested it should, just by the use of the term ‘teacher’ alone.

‘The Government wants to move decisively away from the idea that teaching young children is somehow less important or inferior to teaching school age children. The introduction of Early Years Teachers from September 2013 will raise status and give one title of ‘teacher’ across the early years and schools workforce which can be easily recognised by parents and agencies.’

(NCTL, 2013c).

The use of the term ‘teacher’ is notable. Early Years Teachers did not have parity with QTS in terms of pay and conditions (BBC, 2014), but free schools and academies, not restricted to employing teachers with QTS, could decide their worth in a free market. It is difficult to see beyond an economic justification for this sleight of hand. Gregory (cited in Waldegrave, 2013) noted that in 2013 EYPs earned on average less than two thirds that of teachers (c. £18,000 compared to £30,000 for teachers). QTS gives access to teachers’ pay and conditions, including pension rights, shorter daily contact hours and better holiday entitlement, for example 14 weeks’ holiday compared with six weeks for EYPs. TACTYC, the Association for Professional Development in Early Years, called the concept of a qualified early years teacher without QTS ‘puzzling and unhelpful’ (2013) while the Early Childhood Studies Degrees Network (ECSDN) felt it reinforced the inequity between the two proposed kinds of teachers (2013).

Hevey (2013) summed up the concerns of the sector when she said that this new role would produce second-class citizens in schools, ‘disadvantaged in competition for jobs because of restrictions on their flexibility to be employed in all areas of the school’ and ‘cut off from the core profession of teachers’. Nutbrown (2013) was more forthright. She had called for an increase in the number of qualified teachers with specialist early years knowledge and pedagogical expertise to lead practice in settings to support young children’s learning, play and development. She considered the new Early Years Teacher Status to be ‘insulting and misleading’ and accused the government of merely ‘changing the label on the tin’, using the term to mean something quite different from its ‘commonly understood, established and accepted meaning’ (p.7). Seen from a semiological perspective, a familiar process was taking place; EYPs were renamed as teachers in an attempt to raise their status and make their role more familiar to parents

without giving them the pay and conditions, career structure, professional development opportunities and access to a professional graduate community of practice that are the hallmarks of being a teacher.

The ‘chaos’ induced into the system of EYPS by constant changes in policy at government level (Lumsden, 2011, p.25) was referred to as a ‘shifting policy landscape’ by DfE (7th Feb 2013). The existing 11,000 EYPs could call themselves Early Years Teachers, but could not say they had Early Years Teacher Status, as they had not been assessed against those standards (DfE, 2013b). The key message from DfE was that, although Early Years Teachers were assessed against different standards, impact studies showed that there was no reason they should be seen as any different to teachers. However, the nascent professional identity of EYPs who had been reassured by the message of ‘EYPS here to stay’ in 2011 (Leicester, 2011) was now located firmly within this ‘shifting landscape’ (DfE, 2013a). Inconsistency and opaqueness remained. From April 2013, Teach First offered an early years pathway, to give QTS to those working with children from three to seven in nursery and reception classes in disadvantaged areas. Confusingly, these trainees would be working to the Teachers’ Standards rather than the Early Years Teachers’ Standards.

Early Years Teacher Status and Early Years Initial Teacher Training (EYITT)

From September 2014, new contractual arrangements awarded delivery of Early Years Teacher Status to ITT providers with existing high quality provision, attempting to raise the status by mirroring both the process of teacher training and the language used, trainees rather than candidates and Early Years Teachers. Early Years Teacher trainees had access to similar bursaries as other trainees, and were required to have the same entry requirements at GCSE (English, Science and Maths) and pass the same skills test. However, given the disparity in salaries and career prospects, there were concerns in the sector that EYPs and Early Years Teachers might choose QTS instead, rendering the situation unsustainable (TACTYC, 2014).

In England, the concept of an EYP, with a specialised focus, multi-professional approach and a pedagogical leadership role has given way to the model of Early Years Teacher with a discourse around school readiness rather than whole life outcomes. Meanwhile, in Australia there is evidence of renewed discussion about the value of a trans-disciplinary professional to lead in early childhood. Cartmel et al., (2013)

consider that the label of ‘teacher’ is ‘loaded with perceptions that limit its usefulness in the current policy climate’ and is ‘hampered by siloed understandings’ (p.405).

Meanwhile, those working in early childhood are beginning to resist the discourse and notion that early years provision can solve all society’s problems (Hayes, 2014; Urban, 2014)

Policy Change and Identity – Conclusions

This complex policy backdrop is presented in some detail because it frames and illuminates the lived experience of participants and explains how shifting government policy and regulation first tried to mould and shape their identity and then altered it. My empirical research took place in 2014, soon after participants were re-named as Early Years Teachers. As will be seen later in the thesis, it is evident that the impact of this extended ideological and practice policy shift not only altered their own perceptions and perspectives on their roles, but also how others saw them and interacted with them. All this took place within a time of turbulent change within the sector itself. Certainly, flexibility and adaptability should be key features of any professional; people frequently change jobs and careers through choice or through re-organisation and redundancy and this will affect their sense of professional self (Ibarra, 1999; Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2010). However, in this case their role was both re-named and re-positioned without their consent. Little research exists on how such a change of title, with all its associated cultural, pedagogical, procedural and financial implications, is actually experienced and integrated into a sense of professional identity within the workplace. In a sector where notions of professionalism and identity are notoriously complex and entangled (Skattebol et al, 2016), repositioning and retitling roles is even more troublesome, particularly when EYPS had barely had time to embed itself as a new profession (Lumsden, 2010). In the next chapter, some of the discourse and debate around professionalism and professional identity within existing research and literature is examined to provide a context for this research investigation.

Chapter 3: Professionalism and professional identity in literature and research

Introduction

Phenomenological studies tend to require a relatively limited review of literature at the outset compared to some other types of research, as they are not necessarily theory driven (Smith et al., 2009). Phenomenology is itself both the theoretical framework and the methodology. However, all research is situated within existing knowledge to provide contextual understanding. In view of the specific characteristics of the early years workforce, and the limited availability of research specifically related to EYPS and Early Years Teacher, it is useful to begin the first section of this chapter with a brief exploration of some of the existing narratives related to professionalism in the sector, since EYPS and Early Years Teacher Status both form part of a sustained, intended attempt to professionalise the early years workforce. In the next section, the concept of professional identity is explored in more depth, seeking to establish a shared understanding of the use of the term in this research, while exercising caution about engaging in simplistic definitions (Van Manen, 1990). This section utilises information from other professions, particularly teachers, which may have relevance. The final section considers specific research undertaken with EYPs, which gives more in-depth understanding how they may see themselves and how others see them.

Traditionally, the early years workforce has been viewed as strong on vocation or 'passion', which has contributed to a de-valuing of their role (Moyle, 2001). This is not restricted to early years workers. Nurses and other predominantly female allied health workers are frequently seen in the same light and struggle with similar issues of public image and lack of recognition (Crawford and Brown, 2008). A vocation in early years, including a passion for their work, is often conflated with gendered concepts of caring and emotion. Caring is viewed as a feminised, maternal concept and the use of the word 'emotion' or 'emotional labour' within this process often constructs it as a natural, internal quality and attribute (Field, 2008; Vincent and Braun, 2011), which can then give rise to negative and gendered perceptions. Teaching is always emotionally engaging, but this dimension is not fully recognised in education policy or the teachers' standards (O'Connor, 2008). A compassionate, caring, emotional dimension to early years work is viewed purely as an internal quality of the practitioner rather than a key element in the ethos of the setting (Taggart, 2015) or more importantly, something to be

explored and developed through a process of professionalisation (Osgood, 2006a; Colley, 2006; Madrid et al., 2006; Page, 2014). Seen in this way, professionalism should be the product of 'high levels of professional knowledge coupled with self-esteem and self-confidence' rather than passion (Moyles, 2001, p.8).

Quality, Professionalism and Workforce development in Early Years

It has already been noted that extensive research, debate and policy making internationally identify the impact that well-qualified staff can have on quality provision and therefore outcomes for children (Sylva and Pugh, 2005; European Commission, 2011; Dalli and Urban, 2010; Lazzari, 2012; Vrinoti, 2013; OMEP, 2015). Although Government policy in England situates professionalism within the context of improving quality in early years, as in the case of the introduction of EYPS and Early Years Teacher Status, a simplistic connection between quality provision and well-qualified staff is not wholly accepted (Cottle and Alexander, 2012). Nutbrown (2013) remains convinced of the direct relationship between workforce qualifications and quality in practice, but the juxtaposition of quality and professionalism is questionable at best (Moss, 2007; Urban, 2008). While many countries have introduced policies to professionalise their workforces, perceptions of quality in practice are usually contextual. Unless the relationship is questioned, discourses of 'quality' and 'professionalism' tend to 'merge without interrogation' (Urban, 2008, p.138).

Debates and discussions around professionalism in early years are well rehearsed, situated within various discourses and theoretical fields which reflect the contested nature of the term (Oberhuemer, 2005; Osgood, 2006b, 2009; Miller and Cable, 2008; Urban, 2010; Miller et al., 2012). The discourse of professionalism has been critiqued by Osgood (2006a) and Urban (2009a, b) as an externally imposed construction, which has impeded and disempowered practitioners rather than empowered them. Seen from this viewpoint, both EYPS and Early Years Teacher Status can be viewed as externally imposed through a top-down model within a sector which had already been subject to previous and only partially successful attempts at professionalisation, for example, the introduction of the role of Senior Practitioner. Osgood (2006a; 2009) sees this as part of the 'regulatory gaze'. Using a Foucauldian, post-structuralist, feminist framework, she views imposed professionalism as part of a gendered, managerialist, performativity agenda with a hegemonic discourse around measurability and accountability, which can

silence practitioners and make them passive recipients of an outside, top-down construction of professionalism.

Nevertheless, a bottom-up approach to professionalism from within the early years also co-exists, through a choice of government-sponsored training and academic qualifications which can lead to enhanced career prospects and salary (Pugh and Duffy, 2009; Cable, Goodliff and Miller, 2007). A standards-based regulatory approach, as in EYPS, can be viewed as an enabling process to set clear expectations and baselines of practice, which can then be monitored. Seen in this way, a workforce reform agenda like the introduction of EYPS is an empowering process, which opens up new routes to professionalism in a diverse and underqualified workforce (Miller and Cable, 2011).

Regulation and Standards in Defining Professional Roles

Clearly, any interrogation of the relationship between quality and practice requires consideration of the form and type of professional qualification deemed appropriate. Using Colley and Guery's (2015) definition, EYPS could be seen as a hybrid profession, a new role across professional boundaries, practised within other professional fields, with limited autonomy, but bounded and regulated through competency-based standards. The changes and adaptation of these standards reflect the movement of this role from the hybrid EYPS to a teaching model.

The use of standards in teaching to enhance the status of teachers has been the subject of critique (Sachs, 2003; Tobias, 2003). While accepting that standards are useful in codifying and making public accepted professional knowledge, it is argued that such knowledge should be owned and overseen by the profession itself (Sachs, 2008), and it is questionable to what extent this professional knowledge is owned by the teaching profession (Biesta, 2010). 'Habitus' in early years may not be owned by its members either (McGillivray, 2010). Urban (2008), taking a sociological perspective, sees the imposition of standards in early years as promoting a regime of truth, which becomes 'an effective means of control and regulation of diverse individual practice through dominant knowledge' (p.140). In the case of EYPS in particular, standards were constructed in consultation with the sector, but were the subject of a heavy steer from government. Seen from this perspective, the early years workforce could be viewed as semi-professionals, as they have 'limited control over the recognised body of knowledge of practice and limited autonomy and prestige' (Hordern, 2013:107).

However, the imposition of regulatory frameworks can also provide an opportunity for the repositioning of roles to increase professional recognition (Ortlipp et al., 2011). Although cautioning that privileging of certain discourses around what it is to be a 'good' professional are in danger of producing technicists, practitioner agency is important in positioning someone who can 'create her own eclectic approach to programming that works in her context' (ibid.: 67). Simpson (2011) identifies this discourse with one of active agency within the regulated environment of the schooling sector. However, care should be taken in positioning early childhood educators within an education discourse in order to raise their status if it means that the multi-professional dimension and ethic of care in early years are then lost (Ortlipp et al., 2011). Even being named a qualified teacher may not be enough to raise status. Hargreaves and Hopper's (2006) research into early years teachers found that they were perceived by the public and in the media with less respect than primary or secondary colleagues, even though they had QTS, because they were working with the youngest children.

Personal Beliefs and Values

Brock's (2012) small-scale research with early years educators considers personal attributes and values to be at the core of a model of early years professionalism that has seven dimensions: knowledge, education and training, skills, autonomy, values, ethics and reward. Brock found that these personal core values remained relatively stable regardless of policy changes; and strong practitioners did not drift with policy change but adhered to their own inherent value system. They were 'active agents of change' rather than passive recipients of policy (ibid, p.39). However, this depends on the role and status of the early years worker concerned. Vincent and Braun's (2011) study of Level 3 students in FE colleges found that these students were being moulded to fit in a workforce that had very little opportunity to exercise any professional judgement or autonomy at that level.

Notions of professionalism in early years remain contested and subject to discourses around gender, power and agency. It is against this backdrop that the introduction of EYPS and change to Early Years Teacher Status can be understood. Simpson (2010) has helpfully summarised the debate about professionalism in the field around two conceptual models: one is socially constructed and explicit in policy documents and regulation; the other sees individual practitioners as active agents who are able to resist

the technicist pressures of the 'regulatory' gaze and make informed and autonomous choices in practice. Both these perspectives illuminate an understanding of how professional identity in EYPs and Early Years Teachers is constructed, adapted and experienced.

Exploring Professional Identity

In the next section, the concept of professional identity itself is explored to find a useful definition helpful to the study. Although it is important to agree a conceptual definition of professional identity, caution should be exercised when conducting a phenomenological study in order to avoid looking for presupposed themes, which may prevent an authentic representation of individual participants' experience (McNamara, 2005; Loftus and Higgs, 2010). It is crucial to focus on the meanings individual participants construe, rather than concentrate solely on aspects of that reality. These tensions are challenging to navigate at times.

Identity has become a 'prism through which other topical aspects of contemporary life are spotted, grasped and examined' (Bauman, 2001:121) and certainly professional identity has been the subject of extensive research, particularly in the field of teaching, teacher education and other public services (Beijaard et al., 2004; Day et al, 2006; Swann et al., 2010; Baxter, 2011). Even so, there is limited understanding of how professional identity is constructed and experienced in some of the more recent professions, such as EYPS or Early Years Teachers. Moreover, there is very little research which directly addresses an abrupt and enforced change of identity, such as happened to EYPs although there is, for example, the case of Connexions staff renamed as Personal Advisers (Colley, 2012).

The following discussion draws on research in several professions, including teaching. Although several definitions of professional identity exist, there is as yet no real consensus as to what is meant by this 'slippery' term (Buckingham, 2008). It is useful to start with Knights and Clarke's (2014) simple definition which frames it through twin dimensions of 'who I am and how should I act' (p. 337). In their synthesis of research into teacher identities, Beijard et al., (2004) consider that there is an aspirational element too: not just who I am, but what do I want to become? Ibarra's (1999) definition of professional identity as 'a relatively stable constellation of attributes, beliefs, values, motives and experiences in terms of which people define themselves in a

professional role' allows for the idea of provisional selves, particularly at the outset of a career. A more active approach to the development of professional identity sees it as not stable but shifting (Day et al., 2006), constantly formed and re-formed over time (Mutanen, 2010; Osgood, 2014); a dynamic and evolving process, constantly constructed and reconstructed throughout a career.

Researchers argue that professional identity is both complex and multi-faceted, constructed from deeply held personal belief systems and values, together with internal dimensions of experience, knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Beijard et al, 2004; Flores and Day, 2006; McGillivray, 2010; Murray, 2013). This is, however, always situated within a socially constructed context (McElhinney, 2008; McKeon and Harrison, 2010; Izadinia, 2013), shaped by both work and personal experience and subject to the social and political environment of the time (Kram et al., 2012). Policy, regulation and public perception also play a crucial part in the construction and experience of professional identity, hence the significance of the impact of top-down regulatory initiatives which construct job roles, such as EYPS (Osgood, 2009; Urban, 2010), which followed a similar process in teaching (Sachs, 2003; Evans, 2010). Membership of a profession, and defined job roles within professions, also define how one sees oneself and are seen by others (Slay and Smith, 2011).

What's in a name?

Job roles and titles are not just labels without meaning or attached values, but are significant in the way people view themselves or feel valued (Lightfoot and Frost, 2015). Multiple job titles and names can 'disperse the focus for professionalism' (Adams, 2008: 200) and shape and influence a sense of professional identity (McGillivray, 2008). Confusingly, authors in the field often use early years professional and early years teacher as generic terms, rather than referring to the specific EYP /Early Years Teacher Status which are the subject of this particular research (Faulkner and Coates, 2013). In several countries the term early years teacher refers only to those working in schools with children from five to seven. The specific role of an EYP/ Early Years Teacher is constructed and articulated through the competences attached to each Status, drawing on a cognitive-behaviourist approach to validating individual expertise (Walker and Nocon, 2007). EYPS was designed to be relevant for a multiplicity of workplaces, which proved both a strength in its application and a weakness in how others perceived and understood it.

If the title of a job role itself enables people to identify and organise its functions, their own perception of their identity allows them to attribute meaning to these functions (Castells, 1997). The change of name from EYP to Early Years Teacher is therefore significant in both identification of the functions of the role and the attribution of meaning to that role. In this research, the terms EYP and Early Years Teacher are taken to signify an initially externally imposed professional identity, which is shaped further through personal and contextual factors.

Individual Life Experiences

Teachers invest heavily of themselves in their work and their personal biographies cannot be separated from their identities as teachers (Goodson, 1992). An individual's experiences, beliefs and values will always act as a filter for their professional experiences, therefore identity is constructed on an individual basis (Beijard et al., 2004). This is particularly explicit for career changers into teaching (Williams, 2010) and therefore it could be argued is particularly relevant for those EYPs and Early Years Teachers who are graduates from other professional and academic areas. Williams found that teacher identity development in this case was not a smooth process, but 'fraught with periods of self-doubt and questioning'. Being in practice was not enough to silence these feelings (2011:767). Knights and Clarke (2014) have drawn on empirical research with business school academics to illustrate how fragile and insecure identities can manifest themselves at work; how the 'imposter syndrome' (Clance and Imes, 1978) can feel very real, and how insecurity and identity are 'conditions and consequences' of each other rather than 'monocausally connected' (p.336). Their personal and professional histories and the way teachers are trained can also prove to be mediating influences in a sense of professional identity (Flores and Day, 2006) and this is significant for both EYPs and Early Years Teachers because of the different training routes available.

Workplace Contexts

Contextual experience plays an important role in the construction of a sense of identity in the workplace, and much research on professional identity in early years focuses on those who are either part-time students in work, or in the process of transitioning from student into work, (Goodliff, 2007; Vincent and Braun, 2011; Murray, 2013; Murray and McDowall Clark, 2013; Hallet, 2013). Similarly, much of the research on identity in

the more established role of teacher focuses on becoming rather than being a teacher, on times of transition, engagement with specific issues such as curriculum areas, or profiles of specific kinds of teachers (e.g. Burns and Bell, 2011). Transition into teaching from student to teacher can be a less abrupt experience for those working in early years, who are often working while they are qualifying; studies which focus on experienced practitioners who are not students are relatively limited, although they include both McGillivray's (2010) and Osgood's seminal work (2012). McGillivray's extensive study focusing on those in work uses an ecological perspective and framework to identify the construction and reconstruction of early years workers' professional identities as 'multiple, recurring and competing' (2011:ii), embedded within central discourses of agency, gender and power. In contrast, Kendall et al. (2012) found a limited sense of professional identity in their research subjects; such professional discourses were replaced by family and mothering discourses.

School cultures and classroom practice are essential influences on the construction of identity in teaching (Flores and Day, 2006). Although individual schools can be very different in terms of culture, EYPs /Early Years Teachers tend to work in a wider variety of workplaces. Those in multi-disciplinary early years provision may find themselves working with a range of professionals, including medical and health professionals, social workers and teachers with QTS. These differing professional heritages have an impact on the way people relate to each other in practice, highlighting the tensions inherent in such relationships (Hymans, 2008; Payler and Georgeson, 2013). EYPs/Early Years Teachers may be seen, in common with the early years workforce, through simplistic gendered discourses around care, emotion and passion, but their workplaces can be very complex places in which to negotiate an identity (Messenger, 2013). In these situations, identity markers, which delineate group membership and influence how someone sees themselves in relation to membership of a common group, become more significant (Groebner, 2004 cited in Edwards, 2009; Clark, 2016). Clearly, this process is a more complex and entangled one to navigate for EYPs/Early Years Teachers than for most teachers with QTS, because a multidisciplinary approach to care and education and a broader focus on pedagogy through the requirements of the EYFS (Lumsden, 2012) replace the practical requirements of classroom-based practice. Belonging to a Community of Practice can facilitate the development of professional identity through a process of constant negotiation, although having the same job or title does not necessarily make an effective

Community of Practice (Wenger, 1998). Even so, there is less clarity in the identification and provision of a supportive Community of Practice that could facilitate this process, or provide a coherent approach to professional development, for those working in early years than for teachers (Lloyd and Hallet, 2010).

In this study, professional identity is defined as an organised and systematic construction and evaluation of a perception of the self (Erikson, 1968) within a working context. Although it is constructed from deeply held personal belief systems and values (Beijard et al., 2004), it is both reflective of and influenced by notions of social identity (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) and contextual factors (Izadanaia, 1979). Contextual factors can include attempts by regulatory authorities to influence and construct a defined sense of professional identity through the introduction of a specific job role and title. Participants are always active agents in the construction of a professional identity (Niemi, 1997) which fluctuates and changes through time, often in response to interactions with other groups. Feelings of status, autonomy or powerlessness are features of a sense of professional identity, particularly in relation to other professional groups.

Teachers and Identity – Legitimation

Investigations into professional identity in teaching are helpful in identifying areas of similarity and difference with the early years sector in view of the shift of designation from EYPs to Early Years Teachers. Teaching is referred to as a highly complex and skilled practice, recognised with accreditation and socially legitimised through interactions with colleagues, parents and children. In this model, professional identity comes from ‘his/her position within society, his/her interactions with others and his/her interpretations of his/her experiences’ (Sutherland et al., 2010:455). The issue of social legitimisation for EYPS/Early Years Teacher Status is more complex, considering an examination of policy has already indicated that re-naming the status was an attempt to provide that social legitimisation, following a failure by government to facilitate adequate support with public recognition for EYPS. Hordern (2013) believes this process has forced EYPs to have to ‘adopt the practices, norms and values of a dominant and more powerful professional group, that of teaching’ (p.113), as legitimisation was imposed rather than developed naturally through interaction in society.

Parallels can also be drawn with teachers in the development of professional identity through the growth of a reflective voice to interpret and make sense of experience, referred to by Sutherland et al. (2014) as the development of a 'teacher's voice'. A reflective voice is seen as an essential element in the pedagogical development of a teacher, through reflection in practice and in continuing professional development (Griffiths, 2000) and in leadership development (Layen, 2015). The model of a democratic and reflective practitioner, able to use critical thinking, is at the heart of a value-based democratic professionalism (Moss, 2008). The importance of this critical reflection as part of professional judgement and autonomy, central to concepts of professionalism, means that the development of such agentic, reflective thinking and action is embedded within most HE courses and qualifications, including EYPS /Early Years Teacher Status (Oberhuemer, 2005; Dalli, 2008; Elfer, 2011; McDowall Clark and Baylis, 2012; Ridgeway and Murphy, 2014). An ability to use critical reflection serves to counter the neo-liberal discourses that promote standardisation and public accountability (Osgood, 2010). A strong sense of voice is also seen as an essential part of the development of personal agency in professional identity in other professions which use reflective models, such as academics (Clegg, 2013), and consciously developed in the process of both becoming an EYP and Early Years Teacher (CWDC 2006a; NCTL, 2013b).

In their meta-analysis of empirical studies of Australian Early Childhood Teachers' experiences of negotiating identity, Cumming et al. (2012) note that there is still little known about how teachers in early childhood actually negotiate the discourses of professional identity in their careers. Studies of professional identity in teaching and other professions can highlight some of the areas in which similarities are explicit. In particular, concepts of identity as shifting, established and re-established in a time and place (Lopes, 2009) and subject to both external and internal influences are helpful. An agentic and reflexive voice in pedagogy also appears on the surface to be somewhat similar to teaching. However, public recognition, the effects of the type and method of training and qualification, pay and status, different working roles in diverse provision and the availability of a shared community of practice are very different. If part of a sense of professional identity is seen as an understanding of the specific nature and boundaries of one's work role (Niemi, 1997; Ibarra, 2003, 2005), then studies that explicitly focus on EYPs and Early Years Teachers, although limited in number, should be informative.

Professional Identity in EYPs/Early Years Teachers

In the previous section, some constructions of professional identity in the generic early years field, teaching and other professions were explored. This section examines specific research with EYPs in some detail to provide a deeper conceptual understanding of professional identity within that role. Professional identity in Early Years Teachers, as constructed in government policy, is as yet under-researched, which is natural in view of the time-scale of policy change.

As in the broader early years workforce, Lumsden's (2012) findings from research with EYPs and early years teachers indicated that 'passion' was the most significant factor, although categorised as an attribute relating to resilience. Murray (2013) identifies 'passionate care' as a fundamental value at the core of professionalism in EYPs. This is seen as a combination of a 'strong sense of moral and social purpose with a professional love of children' (p.538). Murray extends this concept of passionate care, describing it as aiding 'perseverance to sustain agency for change' (p. 296); in other words, it is not merely an affective attribute relating to caring or professional love, but something which empowers EYPs to engage in difficult and sensitive change agendas with colleagues to make a real difference in the lives of children. She found that her research subjects became more focused on these internal components of commitment and passion and less on the use of the Status as a 'legitimation' for their role over time (p. 535). This is echoed in Simpson's (2010) findings of an emotional discourse, which included the words 'love for the children and the job', 'caring', 'nurturing' and 'passion', which were used more often than technical or regulatory terms (p. 8). On the other hand, Lumsden's (2012) research subjects saw commitment and perseverance as part of a strong work ethic. According to Lloyd and Hallet (2010), EYPs viewed the softer interpersonal skills, such as being able to listen and being genuine and trustworthy, as essential professional attributes, resonating with Lumsden's (2012) findings about EYPs being approachable and helpful. In these instances, professionalism is seen as behaving in a kind, considerate, consistent and helpful way and this appears part of their professional identity as EYPs.

Confidence and Personal Qualities

Most studies that focus specifically on EYPs have found that they reported a general sense of confidence following achievement of the Status. According to the longitudinal study carried out by Wolverhampton University, this confidence follows from ‘an improved sense of professional status within the early years sector’ reported by EYPs (Hadfield et al., 2012, p.5). Lumsden (2012) refers to this as self-worth, and sees it as an important element in the creation of professional identity. However, this is not as straightforward as it seems and could be influenced by the type of pathway candidates followed and whether they were undergraduate students at the time.

Some early research studies recruited graduate participants who were on the short and validation pathways, and who were either managers or experienced practitioners, which would have influenced both their confidence and their sense of professional identity within the sector (Mathers et al., 2011; Hadfield et al., 2012). However, Goodliff’s (2007) investigation of experienced practitioners on the validation pathway reported an increased confidence through recognition of their skills from staff in their settings. Roberts-Holmes’ (2013) research with a self-selecting purposive sample, most of whom had held EYPS for three to four years, concluded that ‘EYPS had validated the EYPs’ knowledge and experience and given the EYPs more confidence to lead change’ (p.345). Conversely, in Murray’s (2013) research, carried out with students on early childhood studies degree programmes who were also on an undergraduate EYP programme, this confidence only developed over time and was very dependent on ‘the belief others showed in them’ (p.537). Murray links this with the importance of providing appropriate mentoring and opportunities to improve candidates’ self-esteem, citing Moyle’s (2001) argument that confidence is an essential part of professional identity as it provides empowerment. However, there was little awareness of the Status in the sector, which must have had an impact on the confidence of candidates trying to lead practice in settings unfamiliar with EYPS (Murray, 2013). It was even more difficult for Full Pathway participants from academic disciplines outside the sector to develop and sustain professional confidence in such a situation, as they were also seen as lacking workplace experience (Hadfield et al., 2012; Tivey, 2013), particularly when their sense of professional identity was challenged by the very concept of EYPS itself (Lloyd and Hallet, 2010). More positively though, EYP candidates saw professionalism both as part of an externally imposed agenda to raise quality in the workforce and improve outcomes for children, and also part of a sense of personal value associated

with the status, which was expressed in language such as ‘confidence’, ‘passion’, and ‘pride’, alongside ‘respect’ and ‘recognition’ (ibid).

Professionalism and EYPS

Although EYPS was originally introduced as part of a professionalisation process to create a new professional role in a predominantly private and voluntary sector, it is arguable whether EYPs were actually part of a profession at all, in spite of their name. From Lloyd and Hallet’s (2010) sociological perspective, using data from an empirical study of a small number of Long Pathway EYP candidates in training and a larger survey of EYPs conducted for Aspect, a trade union, EYPS ‘does not meet the criteria employed within sociological theory’ to identify a profession. It does not ‘match those used in relation to other professions working with young children, such as qualified teachers or social workers’ (p.76), because it fails to match four key indicators:

- monopolisation of specific and exclusive knowledge and skills
- group member solidarity
- restricting access to learning opportunities
- requiring licence to practice

(Lloyd and Hallet, 2010: 76)

Taking each point in turn, clearly EYPs did not have a monopoly on exclusive knowledge and skills, although it is questionable whether teachers have either (Biesta, 2015), and although EYPs considered that they owned a specific body of knowledge (Lumsden, 2010) it was by no means a monopoly. CWDC attempted to construct group solidarity by tasking LEAs with initiating and maintaining EYP networks, with variable success in a marketised workforce. Arguably, CWDC originally restricted access to learning opportunities through the defined limitation of government funding for EYPS. In the next section, professional knowledge is examined in more depth.

Professional Knowledge, Ownership and Boundary Crossing

The Essex Report (Davis and Capes, 2013), which investigated the effect of EYPs on the ECM outcomes, found that EYPS ‘had given EYPs a real depth of knowledge and understanding of how to achieve outcomes and the confidence to do this’ (p.3).

Ownership of professional knowledge such as this is seen as an essential part of a

professionalisation process and therefore one can argue that it must also play a role in notions of professional identity. Lloyd and Hallet (2010) identified the importance of ‘competence, knowledge and specific skills, developed through professional practice’ in a professionalisation process in their research with EYPs (p. 82). This specific knowledge may be bounded and legitimised by the EYP Standards, but the explicit detail of this is contained in the evidence accepted for their achievement, and this in turn depends on the workplace and specific experience in their job roles. The original Assessment Guidance to the EYPS standards was produced jointly by CWDC and Formation Training, but later updated through consultation with the sector and national moderation (CWDC, 2007). As a result, this legitimisation was partially provided through the sector. In this process EYPS ‘acts as a cultural tool in supporting learning... and translating learning into agency within grounded practice’ (McDowall Clark and Baylis 2012: 238). From this perspective, EYPs could be seen to create and own their professional knowledge, in contrast to Hordern’s (2013) assertion that they did not. EYPs certainly believed they owned distinct knowledge and understanding and had a new identity ‘shaped by professional knowledge, skills and attributes drawn from other professionals and discipline areas’ (Lumsden, 2012: 290).

This model of holistic knowledge at the boundary or intersection of health, education and social care and a new professional identity situated between child, parents and agencies, reflected a more active role for EYPs in a new approach to early childhood, rather than merely a merging of education and care (Lumsden, 2012). It proved particularly significant for those practitioners who worked with children from birth to three, where Manning and Morton (2006) called for the promotion of a ‘professional identity of a critically reflective, theoretically boundary crosser’ (p.50). However, it has already been noted that although working across professional boundaries can be empowering and effective for children and families, it can also be problematic and dependent on the culture of a setting (Payler and Georgeson, 2013). There can be implicit tensions at the boundaries of regions of professional knowledge, viewed through differing professional perspectives, which can affect professional practice (Hordern, 2013). Far from being boundary crossers, some EYPs exercise a ‘bounded agency’ (Simpson, 2010), actively negotiating their professionalism and identity in environments whether or not their role was valued or embedded (Lumsden, 2012: 288). This role therefore needed sensitive navigation in practice. Simpson (2010) argues that agency through self-talk is an important way that EYPs ‘gave meaning to and activated

the enablements and constraints found in the social circumstances in which they operated' (p.12). These constraints are not just structural ones; the physical spaces and environment can also provide markers of identity and play a role in helping to define professional identity (Dalli, 2008).

Leadership – the Clash of Ideologies

Leadership is an important feature in professional identity (Woodrow, 2011; Murray 2013) and often deliberately constructed through policy as part of an 'excellence' initiative (McWilliam et al., 1999). In the case of EYPS, an explicit pedagogical leadership role was embedded across all the standards. In the evaluation of the Graduate Leader Fund (Mathers et al., 2011), measurable impact on outcomes was visible if this pedagogical leadership role was effective and this leadership role was seen as an essential element in professional identity for EYPs (Lloyd and Hallet, 2010; Murray and McDowell Clark, 2013). The individual mechanics of the implementation of such a setting-wide role could be more problematic, however. Preston (2013) refers to the complexities of management in early years, where the traditional image of the job of manager may conflict with regulated professional qualifications such as EYPS and make it difficult to exercise such leadership. This reinforces the findings of Payler and Locke (2013) and Tivey (2013), who found a general lack of understanding of the purpose and parameters of the pedagogical leadership role; the concept of one person offering pedagogical leadership in a setting challenged the collaborative and mutually reciprocal methods of working in practice. EYPs could struggle to exercise leadership outside their rooms in an environment where traditional notions of hierarchical authority were well understood and exercised. Clearly, the notion of pedagogical leadership was still very much under construction, echoing the struggles to establish a coherent pedagogical leadership role highlighted by Murray and McDowell Clark (2013). Furthermore, some setting managers saw the role as threatening their own positions, unsure what pedagogical leadership looked like in practice (Payler and Locke, 2013). Practitioners may resist change because they may see change as a loss (Davis, 2012). Powell (2014) reported that, in spite of being the only EYP in the setting, she was line managed by and reported through her room leader, which effectively blocked the procedure for pedagogical leadership (Powell, 2014). Another graduate entry EYP reported being told 'that's nice, now go and play with the children' when attempting to engage a senior practitioner in pedagogical discussion (Tivey, 2013). In contrast, Murray and McDowall Clark (2013) found a much more consistent and effective model

of ‘catalytic’ leadership in their research with experienced undergraduate and graduate EYPs, both on the programme and revisited two years later when they investigated how they were interpreting leadership. A remarkable lack of reference to EYPS standards in research participants’ data responses indicated perhaps that the leadership model was embedded by two years on, although as all the students came from the same delivery provider it may indicate a consistency at provider level. In this model, leadership was exercised through influence rather than authority underpinned by:

- ‘leadership values and passionate care
- trusting relationships agency and involvement
- practising leadership in the community’

(Murray and McDowall Clark, 2013: 294)

They urged that this system of leadership should not be lost in the change to Early Years Teacher Status. This reflects Simpson’s (2010) hope for a systematic approach to leadership rather than one based on individual professionalisation; a focus on leadership in the ecology of a competent system (Urban (2008, 2009a,b), such as is conceptualised in EYPS or Early Years Teacher Status. In effect, leadership is still visible in Early Years Teacher Status, but it is leadership of early years educators rather than an explicit pedagogical leadership role.

Continuing Professional Development

Although the role of the EYP as a catalyst for both change and innovation of practice in early years settings was clearly set out (McDowall Clark, 2012) it was not always obvious how continuing professional development (CPD) could form part of this process. It is significant that there was no requirement for an induction year for EYPs and no automatic entitlement to CPD, in contrast to qualified teachers (QTS) (Wilkins et al., 2012). A coherent approach to CPD was problematic within a PVI sector where settings were competitive businesses, limiting willingness and opportunities to collaborate locally. EYPs were often the sole graduate in a setting, in contrast to teachers with QTS in schools, who were often surrounded by colleagues with similar levels of education and qualifications. CPD opportunities could be limited to Health and Safety or other procedural approaches rather than pedagogical support.

Even if EYPS is seen as a social and situated activity rather than an individual one (McDowall Clark and Baylis, 2012), then it still proved relatively difficult to set up supportive Communities of Practice (Wenger, 1998) which could enhance a sense of professional identity and belongingness. Supportive EYP networks provided by local authorities were not consistently available and few Communities of Practice recognised their roles in such diverse settings.

If, as Lloyd and Hallet (2010) found, that there was no clearly defined professional group that EYPs felt part of and a lack of a structure for group membership and solidarity essential for a profession, then it is not surprising that it was hard to forge a sense of shared professional identity in places. Although EYPs in their study reported an improved sense of professional status within the early years sector, there was limited understanding of the status outside the sector. Although there was a strong commitment to career progression within the sector, this proved more challenging in practice (Hadfield et al., 2012), particularly in view of the marginalised relationships between pre-school settings and school. In spite of a great deal of research about teachers and professional development, little is generally known about the professional development of early childhood teachers working in school settings (Henderson, 2014).

EYPS v QTS v Early Years Teacher Status – Issues of Practice, Status, Recognition and Reward

Lumsden (2012) concluded that the roles of EYPs and early years teachers were complementary and most effective when working in collaboration. A significant divide between those with QTS and those with EYPS evidenced on the introduction of EYPS in 2006 and highlighted by Hordern (2013), Nutbrown (2012) and others, is clearly apparent at both practice and policy level (Roberts-Holmes, 2013; Murray, 2013). EYPs from childcare backgrounds were particularly affected by ‘legitimation conflicts’ when working alongside teachers with QTS (Simpson, 2011: 707) and EYPs expressed concern about the lack of career prospects and basic recognition within the sector (Lloyd and Hallet, 2010).

Roberts-Holmes (2013) investigated this tension between QTS and EYPS through a small-scale funded research project that asked 75 EYPs in one local authority about optimum conditions for using EYPs to improve quality in early years settings. He calls

it 'absurd' that in 2011 the pay and conditions of EYPs continued to both represent and exacerbate the historic divide between care and education. Unusually, since EYPS was intended to professionalise underqualified members of the workforce, forty-five per cent of the research sample in this study of EYPs already held QTS. Presumably, in this instance it was intended to give expertise in working with children from birth to three to those who already had QTS. However, the findings of the research indicated that participants did not feel that having EYPS was significant; it had not added to their professional knowledge and experience but was 'jumping through more hoops' (ibid, p. 345). They clearly saw themselves as teachers rather than EYPs. This accords with both Simpson's (2010) and Lumsden's (2012) findings that those with QTS had already been socialised into the world of teaching and, professionally, strongly identified themselves as teachers. Although a lack of ability to generalise from such a small study is recognised, this could be a common feature in the identity of those with EYPS and QTS.

The introduction of the new standards similar to QTS, the encouragement to schools to take 2-year-olds and the title Early Years Teacher have moved the Status towards a model of teaching and learning; preparation for school within an educational context rather than a leadership role in a distinct stage of life in its own right. The strong pedagogy and leadership role in EYPS built on reflective practice, encompassing working with parents and families and with confident multi-professional action at its core, may no longer be relevant. It is currently unclear whether professional knowledge in the area of birth to five, and more particularly from three to five, will be owned by teachers with QTS or by Early Years Teachers and how far their identity allows them to make informed and appropriate decisions in practice (Stenberg, 2010). It remains to be seen how boundary crossing will take place here (Kram et al., 2012) and how issues of status and public recognition, particularly from parents, will play out. If Lloyd and Hallet's (2010) argument stands, then the renaming of EYPs as Early Years Teachers should provide them with a more recognisable professional identity as a teacher, even though they may not fully own that identity. As yet, there is very limited literature on how they are experiencing the new role of Early Years Teacher beyond policy statements.

Conclusion

Findings from research and literature suggest the complexity of constructing a professional identity as an EYP or Early Years Teacher within a professionalisation agenda in a diverse and mainly private and voluntary early years sector, traditionally split between care and education. Evidence from research indicates that EYPS went some way towards the establishment of a new holistic professional situated at the boundaries of several professions and able to operate as a pedagogical leader within a multi-professional context. However, it is also evident that the twists and turns of successive government policy, moving from a universalist and multidisciplinary social justice approach to a more targeted, education-focused social mobility model and complicated by austerity measures, have both moulded and disrupted this process, eventually repositioning EYPs as Early Years Teachers and catapulting them into another identity entirely. McGillivray (2008) called for more research into professionalism and identity by consulting practitioners themselves. In the next chapter, it is argued that a phenomenological approach is the best way to understand the personal and lived experience of EYPs who have become Early Years Teachers, through their own voices and perspectives, and hear how they have made sense of their world.

Chapter 4: Methodology

Introduction

In this study, I wanted to investigate the lived experience of participants who had achieved EYPS and subsequently become Early Years Teachers following government policy change. I was principally interested in their own perceptions of their experience of this change of role in the very different settings in which they worked. I wanted to investigate how this may have affected their sense of professional identity. Previously I had become comfortable working within an interpretivist paradigm in historical research (Hryniewicz, 1983), seeking to understand the world through the interpretation of individual perspectives (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2001).

An interpretivist framework acknowledges that reality is not some universal truth out there waiting to be discovered, but is socially constructed and changeable and always negotiated within social constructions and contexts (Denzin and Lincoln 2005; Polkinghorne, 1983). Historical research (my own original background) involves locating, analysing and evaluating data and source material and engaging with the complexity of contextualisation and perspective inherent in this process. Historians work within paradigms such as critical theory or feminist approaches, meanwhile wrestling with some of the more complex concepts of self and identity, mirroring such processes in education and social science (Steedman, 2002). What may be different in education and social science is the role of the researcher in the process of the creation of original data, not merely in the selection, evaluation, analysis and synthesis of such data. In such cases the careful selection and development of an appropriate research strategy is a crucial part of the rigorous approach used (Holliday, 2007).

Rejecting narrative approaches

My original intention was to use narrative methods in common usage in history and social science (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000), which ‘view events, norms, values etc. from the perspective of the people who are being studied’ (Roberts, 2002: 3). Both Osgood’s (2012) study of professional identities in nursery workers and Goouch’s (2010) study of playful pedagogies in early years teachers used narrative approaches effectively to illuminate the essence of practice and identity.

Narratives of practice are also often used to investigate the construction of identity in teaching. For example, Watson (2006) examines the concept of professional identity as an ongoing process, emerging through narratives of practice by drawing on one teacher's experience of behaviour management, and constructs a model of developing and sustained professional identity within a socio-cultural context. Watson sees teachers' stories as an important element in the construction of their professional identity, with limited discussion of the drawbacks of such an approach or her own role in influencing the study as researcher (Fontana and Frey, 2005). Clearly, issues of epistemology need careful consideration in order to avoid the misuse of narrative when representing the experiences of others; careful, rigorous approaches should be used which minimise subjectivity and distortion (Webster and Mertova, 2007). Researchers who use narrative approaches can also interpret and re-write the stories and accounts, 're-storying' according to Creswell (2008, p.519), to produce meaning which can appear different from that intended by the participant (Riessman, 2011).

Although phenomenology has a strong association with forms of narrative analysis, meaning making and interpretation can inadvertently take one away from meaning intended by participants (Smith et al., 2009). I thought it essential to try to remain true to object of my research and therefore preferred to represent and interpret their reality through a phenomenological approach (Van Manen, 1990).

Phenomenology

Sumsion (2002) and Gauntlett (2007) provide thought-provoking examples of how phenomenology can be used to explore lived experiences, which resonated with an investigation of the experience of identity. Phenomenology as a research approach originated in the philosophy of Husserl (1907-1964), and focuses on developing an understanding of how people experience the world through exploring their lived experience or life world from a first person perspective, rather than attempting to measure human experience through more scientific, external and objective methods, (Husserl, 1927, cited in King and Horrocks, 2011; Husserl and Welton, 1998). As an ontological approach, phenomenology focuses on the meaning people give to phenomena and how they think, believe and act in a particular way in relation to an experience or a construct based on how it is experienced (Van Manen 1990; Savin-Baden 2013; Denzin and Lincoln, 2013). This seemed a particularly appropriate approach to take in this case, because the purpose of my research was to describe,

explore, understand and strive to interpret the experience of professional identity in EYPs/ Early Years Teachers within their own particular work context; in other words, how they individually made meaning of their professional identity as a phenomenon (Bentz and Shapiro, 1998).

Van Manen reminds us of Merleau-Ponty's remark that 'we can only really understand phenomenology by doing it' (Van Manen, 1984:39). He provides four key interactive features of phenomenological research, which were helpful in providing an overall rationale, philosophy and structure to my research at the outset:

- a) Turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world
- b) Investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualise it
- c) Reflecting on the essential themes which characterise the phenomenon
- d) Describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and re-writing

(Van Manen, 1984:39)

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) - a Rationale

The philosophical ideas embedded in phenomenology have been used more recently to inform Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), which draws on the basic tenets of phenomenology as articulated by Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty (1964) and others, but integrated with theory and practices from psychology. Heidegger (cited in Smith et al., 2009) considered that 'relatedness to the world' is a fundamental part of being human and used the term 'intersubjectivity' to describe this relationship between a person and the world or context they live in (p.17). In this way, phenomena are always experienced and contextualised. Underlying IPA is the recognition that research participants will present a view of themselves and their experiences based on their own perceptions and ideas (de Mais et al., 2007) and IPA seeks to capture and represent 'their attempts to make meanings out of their activities and to the things happening to them' (Smith et al., 2009:21).

The use of IPA can also uncover any invariant structure of phenomena across different contexts (Van Manen, 1984; King and Horrocks, 2011). This was particularly important in the context of this research, which set out to investigate the experience of professional identity in five Early Years Teachers working in very different settings.

Although cognisant of the role of personal development in the construction of professional identity (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013), the use of IPA allowed a focus on not only the individual experience of each participant, but also on what might be identified as common to all the participants: any similar articulation of professional identity as experienced by them all.

At the centre of the phenomenological approach is the tenet of hermeneutics or interpretation. In IPA the process of analysis is an iterative one. According to Smith et al. (2009), one can move ‘back and forth through a range of different ways of thinking about the data, rather than completing each step, one after the other’ (p.28). In this way, IPA enables a researcher to go from the experience of the individual to the experience of the group and back again (Laverty, 2003; Smith et al., 2009; Savin-Baden and Major, 2013). Common experience cannot be used to generalise beyond the research subjects’ data or used to construct dimensions of professional identity or measurable constructs as, for example, Cowin et al., (2013) did in their study of professional identity indicators in nursing.

Researcher and Reflexivity

I was aware that I should bring thoughtfulness to my research in the way that Van Manen (1984) suggests. As pedagogues we must ‘act responsibly and responsively in our relations with... those to whom we stand in a pedagogical relationship... the theoretical practice of phenomenological research, like the mundane practice of pedagogy is a ministering of thoughtfulness’ (p.38). A thoughtful approach was an important dimension to my research investigation. As Programme Director of EYPS and New Leaders in Early Years (NLEY), I felt a sense of responsibility to those students whom I had enthusiastically recruited to the EYPS programme by selling the concept and value of EYPS, who became EYPs and were then ‘morphed’ into Early Years Teachers following policy change. I wondered how this experience had affected them. What influenced their view of themselves and what were the challenges and the positive factors? I wanted to know the reality of their lived experience; how they navigated or failed to navigate the complexities of their workplace during and after this shifting policy landscape (DfES, 2013).

Husserl’s original concept required the researcher to set aside or ‘bracket’ their own experience to enable them to view the experiences of research participants from a fresh

perspective, and to see the phenomena under scrutiny without the lens of pre-conceived ideas and cultural perceptions; in other words, to reach an 'essence' of the phenomena as it really is to them (Lavery, 2003). As a mathematician, Husserl brought the conceptual idea of bracketing out the taken-for-granted perceptions, as one would do in an algebraic equation, leaving what exists for the research subject in their consciousness through their reflection, memory, perception and values (Husserl, 1927, cited in King and Horrocks; Smith et al., 2009:13). This emphasis characterised his approach to what became known as transcendental phenomenology. Proposing to use this methodological approach in my research proved to be more of a challenge. My experiences as Programme Director and my close contact with the DfE Early Years Policy Team through the NLEY programme during the period of tumultuous policy change could not help but influence my perceptions. The form and content, concepts and structures of EYPS and Early Years Teacher were thoroughly embedded in my consciousness through each twist and turn of policy change. I was unsure how well I would be able to achieve a necessary bracketing in the sense intended by Husserl.

Inevitably, Husserl's ideas have been challenged and adapted over the years and I found myself drawn to Heidegger's interpretation of phenomenological research. Although Husserl accepted that the researcher would have preconceptions and biases and should recognise them in order to 'bracket' them, Heidegger acknowledged that it is impossible to stand outside your own self-reflections to enable you to 'bracket' them sufficiently. Researchers should instead be able to use a reflexive process to enable them to evaluate how previous and existing perceptions may influence their interpretation of the research data (Van Manen, 1984; Merleau-Ponty, 1964 cited in Smith et al., 2009). According to Heidegger, pre-conceptions will emerge throughout the research process and the researcher needs to use constant vigilance to ensure a 'spirit of openness' (Smith et al., 2009:27). As a fundamental part of my approach to this research, I needed to be able to step outside my habitual ways of thinking and bring an open mind to my role as researcher, aware of the effect my previous or current thinking might have during the research process. In addition, I was aware of my own nascent and embedded dimensions of professional identity, both as a teacher with QTS and as a doctoral researcher (Sweitzer, 2013). It was challenging but essential to try to reconcile these perspectives. In the double hermeneutic approach used in IPA the participants try to make sense of their world, while I try to make sense of them trying to make sense of their world (Smith and Osborn, 2015).

Miller and Glassner (2011) interrogate the concept of insider/outsider research through the use of interviews and I found this discussion helpful in positioning myself within my own research. Edwards (2009), talking about research in other cultures, acknowledges that it is possible to understand the experience of others as a sensitive outsider, but also cautions against 'breathless endorsements of the privileged view of the insider' (p.43). My familiarity with the early years culture and context and the process by which my participants achieved EYPS/Early Years Teacher Status gave me enough subjective knowledge of my research subjects' 'life worlds' to understand their lived experiences to some extent as an insider. However, as a doctoral researcher holding QTS who did not share the realities of their working life, I was also uncomfortably aware of being an outsider.

I approached this research from a clear value base of support for those working in early years settings and my research participants were aware of this from the outset. My familiarity with EYPS/Early Years Teacher Status came from direct experience of contract management and programme direction. In these roles, I experienced policy construction, deconstruction and reformulation at very close quarters through this lens, which was often an uncomfortable process. I had to respond to each new policy initiative, while attempting to uphold my own personal and professional values and defend the interests of my students. More recently, I was employed by QAA to review EYPS/ Early Years Teacher Status provision nationally (2012-14). Interpretive approaches to research acknowledge not only the subjective viewpoint of participants but also the role that researcher subjectivity and personal stance plays in all aspects of the research process (Holliday, 2007; Silverman, 2011). I would return to this issue frequently in all aspects of the research process while I negotiated the complex procedures to deal with the 'messy reality' of my research (Holliday, 2007: 7; Smith et al., 2009; Donnelly et al., 2013).

Research Methods

Research Participants

Some of the contentious issues around sample size in research, particularly in qualitative research studies, are highlighted by Baker and Edwards (2012). Their selected sample of experts in the field of qualitative research recommend considering the appropriateness of the number selected in relation to the methodological and

epistemological considerations of individual research projects. In IPA, sampling should be theoretically consistent with the qualitative paradigm and the requirements of IPA itself, in other words research participants are selected because they offer insight into a particular context and experience that gives them a specific perspective. For the same reason, sample sizes are usually small and for a professional doctorate, the recommendation is usually between four and ten individual interviews with up to four participants, to ensure that more than a superficial analysis of data takes place (Smith et al, 2009).

My research participants were selected using purposive sampling (Cohen and Manion, 2001; Newby, 2010; Smith et al, 2009). I was aware of the logistical and practical considerations to consider when approaching research participants (Creswell, 2009). I contacted a selection of people who had achieved EYPS and asked them to be part of the research, looking for participants who were willing and able to be reflective about their experience and who would allow me to interview them in their place of work. As a designated EYPS provider, I used my institution's own graduates as a starting point. Although I did not want to restrict participation to one institution, it proved problematic to recruit other participants, because most EYPs working locally had achieved the Status through my institution as a result of the geographical approach used by CWDC to the funding for training places. Logistical reasons meant it was important not to have to travel too far for interviews and as Flick (2008, cited in Baker and Edwards, 2012) notes, logistical issues have a major impact on the number of research participants recruited.

Furthermore, one or two of these participants could also be graduates of the NLEY programme, which I had managed and directed, although I had not had direct involvement in the assessment process. It could be the case that their constructions of professional identity may have been standardised in some way on the programme. On the other hand, I felt that my involvement in the evaluation of the NLEY programme had given me access to data that could be very helpful in informing my research.

I recruited other participants through a series of conferences and expert lectures held at my institution as part of the establishment of a community of practice for EYPs locally. Finally, my collaborative work with the Local Authority EYP Network enabled me to recruit other participants at a workshop on the introduction of Early Years Teacher

Status. The participants had distinct job roles in a variety of settings in different models of early years provision, reflecting the complexity of the roles and contexts of Early Years Teachers. Although the use of IPA often requires a homogeneous sample to be able to identify variability within the group, I was pragmatic about my ability to recruit participants in this way.

Although seven participants were originally recruited, two dropped out just before the research began. It would have been useful to represent a male perspective in a traditionally feminised sector, but the sole male prospective participant left the sector, citing a discomfort with the gendered narratives in the early years (Osgood 2012; Skelton, 2012). He experienced the workplace as anti-male and exclusionary, with poor pay and conditions and lack of career progression (Cameron, 2006). Another participant dropped out, 'defecting', as she put it, with a 'heavy heart', to do a PGCE and achieve QTS to work in school because of lack of career opportunities and financial rewards in early years.

Bell (2011) found that participants who volunteered to take part in qualitative research that involves a co-constructed element or a democratised research relationship were often motivated by finding it an empowering process, which validates their experience in some way. Four of the participants in this study commented that they agreed to take part as it indicated that someone thought they were worth researching, which they felt is not always the case for those working in the field of early childhood.

All five participants achieved EYPS and are now entitled to call themselves Early Years Teachers. One participant also has QTS. They work in a variety of settings in different job roles: children's centre teacher, childminder, university lecturer, senior practitioner, setting owner-manager. Two of the participants own and run their own businesses; one is employed by a local authority, one by a charity and one by an HE institution. There is a grid giving details of the participants at the beginning of the findings section.

Data collection: Interviewing as central to phenomenology

Data can be collected for phenomenological studies in several ways, but central to the process is the collection of first person accounts of lived experience (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013; Smith et al., 2009). My intention was to conduct three interviews with each participant during the year in their place of work. Although interviewing is a well-

recognised instrument used frequently in qualitative research, it is a complex process (Richards, 2009). IPA requires rich data through participants offering detailed, reflective first-person accounts and therefore interviewing is one of the most common ways for the researcher to try to enter the participant's life world. Smith et al. (2009) include some very useful discussion of some of the protocols for interviewing in IPA, which were helpful as a starting point in formulating my ideas. In particular, they recommend that the researcher creates an interview schedule of suggested questions and topics in advance, using this as a basic framework, which is then enhanced through open and probing supplementary questions. However, I was aware that I was investigating my participants' lived experience of professional identity as Early Years Teachers and was keen for my interview to be as non-directive as possible, while also conscious of my role as co-constructor of data, depending on the questions I asked (Kvale, 1996; Smith et.al, 2009). A helpful model of a research interview as a reciprocal relationship is provided by Yeo et al., (2014), although I was mindful that in phenomenology it is important to let the participant speak for themselves, which in this study they certainly did.

I decided against using a schedule of questions and explained my reasons for this clearly to each participant when recruiting them and at the outset of the Learning walk. . at the outset. I was worried that using such a list might signal to my participant what I thought was important, or give the impression of prioritisation depending on what I asked about first. My questions were open-ended and general. However, I did explain that I had a list of topics which I would refer to at the end of the interview in case I felt that we had not covered areas that I thought might be relevant. In the event, I did not feel it necessary to use them in any of the interviews. The direction of the interview was, in the main, decided by the participant.

I found the guidance of Garton and Copland (2010) to be helpful in considering the effect of any prior relationship with my research subjects on data generation during the interview process. The assessment process for EYPS required an assessment visit to the setting when candidates evidenced their competence against standards (CWDC, 2007; NCTL, 2012). I was concerned that this prior experience might inhibit my participants or in some way remind them of that assessment visit, which might then lead them to focus on evidencing practice, or might destabilise them in some other way. However, all

had been successful at achieving EYPS and I had not been their assessor, so it proved relatively easy to maintain a focus on their experience of identity.

Smith et al. (2009) caution against accidentally leading the participant, making value judgements or getting over-excited about the issue under discussion. My experience as an EYPS assessor was useful here as I was used to working within strict parameters about the use of feedback; this helped me to be reflective about my responses and use probing questions during the interviews. However, when analysing my early transcripts, I noted occasions when I had pre-empted a response from a participant without waiting for them to respond and I worked on avoiding this in subsequent interviews.

I was mindful of the drawbacks and problems associated with the use of semi-structured interviewing. Denzin and Lincoln (2013) remind us that ‘interviews narrow parameters of responses’ and ‘favour the articulate’ (p.195) and this is particularly true in the case of phenomenology which uses extended interviews (Van Manen, 1990). I considered asking participants to keep a reflective diary as a way to gain access to their day-to-day thoughts which might act as a prompt in advance of the interviews (Harvey, 2011), but this proved a stumbling block for several participants because of its time-consuming nature. I was very aware of Creswell’s (2009) guidance that research should not be disruptive or too time-consuming for participants.

A focus on an embodied experience is required to reach the essence of creating identity and word-only interviews may not be enough to represent this process (Merleau-Ponty, 1964). Gauntlett (2007) used LEGO models as metaphors to represent key influences in the construction of identity and while not being totally persuaded by this approach, I was aware of the ability of images and artefacts to ‘evoke and create collective and personal memory’ (Prosser, 2013:187). I wanted to use supplementary data gathering methods to enhance the interview process, as I had done in two previous research projects (Griffiths et al., 2013; Hryniewicz, et al., 2014).

Learning Walks as a Data Gathering Method

Learning Walks are traditionally used as quality assessment tools, particularly in America. I developed the concept of a Learning Walk as a research data gathering method in a previous collaborative research project. Then participants demonstrated and evidenced their leadership development and the impact of this leadership on children

and families while walking through their setting (Hryniewicz and Jackson, 2011). Following the success of the approach, I refined and adapted the process of a walking research interview or Learning Walk for this research. It seemed a particularly appropriate way to capture the four dimensions of lived experience of interest to phenomenological researchers; space or spatiality, time or temporality, body or corporeality and relationships (Van Manen, 1990). It also utilised concepts of state dependent memory (Conway et al., 2015) to facilitate the retrieval of appropriate reflections and memories in the participants. Using Learning Walks for research purposes has subsequently been developed by other researchers in America as a way of evidencing change in practice over time through a longitudinal study (Campbell, 2011). Observation is a commonly used data gathering method. A researcher can become familiar with an unfamiliar research context by walking through the research space, combining observation with contextual commentary from a community member (Hennink et al., 2011; Ross et al., 2009). However, in my research, the Learning Walk was designed to allow the participant to lead the process and focus on what they thought was important by the route that they took, both metaphorically and literally, and the things they talked about. Aanstoos's (1983) concept of the 'Think Aloud' method of data collection, when participants articulate their thinking out loud during a process, was also helpful in refining my choice of this method. It also gave me the opportunity to experience their context, or lived experience, directly as they explained, rationalised and illustrated it.

Logistics and issues in Learning Walks

Early years settings are busy places and I was conscious of minimising disturbance to all. In fact, the Learning Walks proved to be less intrusive than using a room would have been, as many of the settings had limited space available for interviews. However, there were also challenges inherent in the concept. It is difficult to record information while walking and technology can be notoriously unreliable. In my previous research, both researcher and participant wore iPods with microphones. These were unobtrusive but captured all the discussion without the need to write. However, in the first interview, one of the iPods malfunctioned and I switched to hand-held voice recorders. This seemed ethically preferable, as it was more obvious to setting staff that they might be recorded if they spoke to either of us. Gordon's (2012) interrogation of the use of an audio-recorder in research interviews informed my thinking about how recording shapes the research interaction without necessarily becoming a methodological limitation.

For many research interviews, interruptions are a hazard (King and Horrocks, 2010). During Learning Walks, when participant and researcher are not confined to a private interview room, there are many such interruptions. I saw these as an integral part of the process as they provided an extra dimension of data (Hall et al., 2008). For example, during one Learning Walk, the participant's articulation of distributed leadership was made overt by the way her staff interacted with her and much of the richness of the data came from explicit interactions and explanations with children and staff.

Transcriptions and Field Notes

Interviews and Learning Walks provided rich qualitative data transcribed for ease of analysis. However, nuances of body language and some of the physical dimensions of the Learning Walk were more difficult to capture in audio form and needed supplementation. I was particularly aware that I should not miss the sorts of 'sticky moments' that Riach (2009) refers to which represent the reflexive considerations of participants when, for example, there is a pause in discussion. These silent spaces are an important feature in phenomenological research (Van Manen, 1990). Although the transcriptions provided rich data for analysis, reflective field notes taken just after the interview were a key part of the data gathering, enabling me to elucidate, explain or notate (Arthur et al., 2014). In addition, I used this process to reflect on my own role during and after the visits.

I conducted three Learning Walks with each participant over a 15-month period between December 2013 and February 2015. The first two lasted about 50 minutes and produced so much rich data that the third visit was shorter at 25 minutes, reflecting Moustakas's (1994) view that determining sufficiency in phenomenological research is always a subjective process. One participant had been made redundant from her role by the time of the last Learning Walk and we met for an interview in my office instead. Please see Appendix 4 for a full schedule of data collection with timescales.

Ethical Issues

Ethical approval was gained through the University ethics review procedures according to guidelines set by BERA (2004). Research is always a site of power and qualitative research poses particular challenges (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Creswell, 2009; Ritchie

et al., 2014). An initial issue was that as the University was a designated EYPS/Early Years Teacher Status provider, I might be restricted only to participants who were ex-students of the University, which could raise uncomfortable issues about power relationships on both sides, as they might feel pressurised to take part. I made it clear that participation was voluntary and that at any time during the data gathering process, participants could withdraw from the research project. All participants signed a consent form, which clearly set out the purpose and processes of the research. However, informed consent is a process rather than an outcome and had to be re-negotiated through discussion during the life of the project, as referred to later (Vincent and Warren, 2001; King and Horrocks, 2010).

Because phenomenological research aims to capture the voices, perceptions and feelings of participants, issues of clarity of communication, privacy, security and anonymity are crucial (Hennink et al., 2011). Smith et al. (2009) remind us that there is no such thing as confidentiality in IPA research because data is always collected with the intention that someone should see it. Anonymity is all that can be promised. I was conscious of how I would protect the anonymity of my participants and asked them if they would like to choose their own aliases in order to anonymise the data, but all declined. How data is represented then becomes an important factor. During the course of my research, I wrestled with several ethical problems that needed re-negotiating with my participants. For example, one of the research participants became national chair of a professional organisation during the research. This proved to have a major impact on her sense of professional identity, but representing it also identified her, so I had to revisit the consent process with her to discuss this specifically.

Another participant's job role was discontinued during the time of my research and this led to our discussions touching on some emotive and distressing subjects. Indeed, any kind of interviewing may also precipitate strong emotions or touch on sensitive issues, which may cause upset to both the participant and the interviewer. I had to handle these through negotiation as they arose, rather than expect that informed consent at the outset would automatically cover these (Hennink et al, 2011; Webster et al., 2014). I was also aware that in-depth exploration of such sensitive issues could stay with both me, as the researcher, and my research participants for a while, and made the opportunity to talk with them afterwards if appropriate. In one Learning Walk the participant became very

upset as we touched on a sensitive area and we had email and phone contact afterwards to discuss this further.

Learning Walks as a research method had their own ethical challenges. The process was explained clearly to the setting staff by the research participant in advance so that they were aware that the use of the voice-recorder might mean that their interactions formed part of the recording. However, they had the choice not to engage if they chose. In addition, I was very conscious that my presence should not interfere too much with the normal running of the setting and be an undue intrusion, so I stepped back when an issue arose which needed the immediate attention of the participant and allowed them to deal with it. Participants were offered transcripts of the interviews after the second Learning Walk.

Writing my Data – Explication

The writing of phenomenological research is not performed separately after completion of all the data gathering, but is an essential and integral part of the process of describing and interpreting the meaning of lived experience. Phenomenological research needs to describe well (Van Manen, 1990; Finlay, 2014) through a process of writing and re-writing which Smith et al. (2009) refer to as ‘immersive and disciplined attention to the unfolding account of the participant’. Thus a good IPA study also always includes ‘a considerable number of verbatim accounts’ (Smith et al., 2009:180) which give the participant a voice and allows the reader to examine or confirm the interpretations made. I knew I must actively interpret the experience of the participant through the process of a double hermeneutic approach in both an empathetic and critical way. Hermeneutic interpretation differs from analytic interpretation in that it attributes meaning to thoughts and feelings occurring to the participants and the researcher (Smith et al., 2009). There are naturally tensions in the presentation of research this way because of the length of such a descriptive and interpretive element. I have tried to stay as close as possible to the essence of the experience of each participant by focusing on each in turn and have used their own words wherever feasible (Van Manen, 1990), meanwhile striving to implement the more interpretivist approach of IPA.

In this study, Learning Walks provided a wealth of rich data, which included the interactions between my participants and me, interactions with other staff and children and reflections on our interaction with the environment. Although I supplemented this

with notes in a research journal immediately after the Learning Walk (Field Notes), as my research progressed, I was able to weave in reflections and comments during the Learning Walk itself, which then appeared in the transcripts more explicitly.

Although I did not follow the model precisely, I found Gee's (2011) reflection on the analysis and writing of her research into the psychological impact of retirement to be particularly helpful in constructing a specifically multi-directional, iterative and inductive process of interpretation and explication. Gee uses seven steps: reading and re-reading, initial noting, descriptive comments, linguistic comments, conceptual psychological comments, emergent themes and writing up.

I began to write up each Learning Walk immediately afterwards while it was very fresh in my mind. This first provided a descriptive account, which reflected as closely as possible the lived experience of participants. Real familiarity with data requires extensive reading and re-reading of the texts of interviews multiple times and following this process I moved to Gee's (2011) third and fourth stages, an explicit focus on language and form, noting conspicuous conceptual and linguistic features such as metaphors, phrases and analogies which revealed embedded meaning. Van Manen (1990) refers to these as idiomatic phrases, born of lived experience. Connections began to be made between ideas and concepts; writing and re-writing this descriptive account helped to reveal the discourse through which participants described and explained and gave meaning to their experiences.

At this point, a level of conceptual analysis began to reveal ideas and themes within interviews, although there is a key difference between a phenomenological approach and that of content analysis where criteria are posited beforehand. Themes do not just reflect the participant's thoughts and words, accepted uncritically, but in the double hermeneutic approach inevitably reflect my own interpretation. According to Smith et al., (2009), they should reflect a 'synergistic process of description and interpretation' (p. 92), essential in IPA. This was the most challenging aspect; I was mindful of Gee's advice to not only embrace 'adventurous interpretation' but also not to fear 'mundanity' or 'conformity' (Gee, 2011:22). I was aware that my insider knowledge gave me familiarity with the 'regimes, ritual, language' (Probert, 2006:4) of my research context but needed to acknowledge my own role in interpretation and explanation. Further conceptual analysis then began to reveal overarching themes that were present in more than one interview. In this way, the identification of themes within each interview was

followed by a search for connections across research participants using the process explained above. This is termed explication (Groenewald, 2004) rather than analysis.

In Appendix 5, I have included a transcript of the first Learning Walk with Kate to demonstrate how space, place and embodied aspects are powerfully represented during the Learning Walk. For example, some of the most insightful reflection about the difference between the pedagogical approach in a school and pre-school environment happened after the pre-school had been moved to the school building, as we stood in the empty room that had previously housed it. Kate's sensitivity to her role as part of a multi-professional team was reflected in the way she spoke quietly and moved carefully through the physical space of the shared room, conscious of the issues of shared ownership and professional differences. However, being in that space with other professionals also triggered valuable reflection on the challenges of such a situation and her own strategies for addressing these. Her enthusiasm and passion for outdoor learning was unmistakeable whenever our Learning Walk took us outside, as was her sadness at the loss of that outdoor space to the pre-school. Moving in and out of blocked or open entrances, provoked discussion about the importance of place and accessibility, which is why I have emphasised their importance in the later discussion about Kate in chapter five. There is further discussion about the importance of place and space in the individual transcripts of each participant.

Conclusion

Phenomenology provides both a methodology and a theoretical framework for this study. The aim of IPA is to provide an in-depth and interpretative account of the experience of participants within their lived world, which made it such an appropriate approach to take in investigating the lived experience of my participants and their struggles with professional identity over time, as their contextual worlds changed their own perspectives. IPA also emphasises the dynamic nature of research; the researcher is an active participant in the process of research and I wanted to capture this dimension of immersion into their worlds by using Learning Walks. There were challenges to face though, not least in getting an appropriate balance between a descriptive and interpretive approach when presenting participants' accounts.

In the next chapter, I focus on each participant in turn, describing, interpreting and analysing: explicating their attempts to make meaning of their lived experience through the double hermeneutic process (Smith et al., 2009). A discussion section identifying individual and common themes relating to their constructions of professional identity, with reference to research and literature follows in Chapter 6.

Chapter 5: Findings - Participants' Lived Experience

In this chapter, I present descriptive and interpretative accounts of each participant in turn because, although they are all Early Years Teachers, their working environments and practices are actually very different and subject to individual agentic influences and constraints. I have organised the data in relation to key themes identified for each, and have selected themes which in my view relate to dimensions of a professional identity. These include recurring themes such as places and spaces and pedagogical leadership, in addition to common themes more recognisable as concepts of professional identity, such as professional recognition of their role as Early Years Teachers in relation to those with QTS, or multi-professional working. I have also selected some individual themes such as The Business.

Sections or quotes from the transcripts are included verbatim in this chapter, in line with the recommendations of IPA. In some cases, my own interjections form part of this dialogue and therefore I have included them where appropriate. I have also tried to reflect the richness of the whole experience of the Learning Walk by including and commenting on interactions and incidents when appropriate.

I have identified each interview with the initial of my research subject followed by the number of the Learning Walk or interview, for example LW3. I include a table of participants, which indicates their work role and setting and the pathway taken.

Fig 1 Research Participants at outset of research

Pseudonym	Current Status	Previous Status	Setting	Job Role	Pathway	Employer
Becky	Early Years Teacher	EYP	Private Nursery	Senior Practitioner	Full (NLEY)	Private Nursery – voluntary sector organisation. Salaried
Kate	Early Years Teacher /QTS	EYP/QTS	Children's Centre	Children's Centre Teacher with QTS	Short	Local Authority Salaried
Maddie	Early Years Teacher	EYP	University	Lecturer: Early Childhood	Full (NLEY)	Higher Education Salaried
Gael	Early Years Teacher	EYP	Child-minding	Child-minder	Long	Owner/manager
Nina	Early Years Teacher	EYP	Pack-away Pre-School	Manager	UPP	Owner/manager

Becky

Context

Becky became an EYP in 2011, as part of a government initiative to attract high achieving graduates from other academic disciplines to work in early years settings in areas of social disadvantage. Her first degree was in geography and she had an MA Early Years. In 2013, when my research began, she had just become an Early Years Teacher and taken a job as a senior practitioner in a private nursery run by a charity and attached to a Children's Centre. The nursery is in a very deprived coastal community, which is geographically separated from the mainland by road and rail bridges. There is a sense of isolation and remoteness about the location.

Becky was aware that she was employed 'because they needed a graduate', but although she was by then renamed as an Early Years Teacher, her appointment was as a Senior Practitioner, based in the pre-school room, indicating compliance with a term used commonly in setting leadership. She reveals the tensions in this dual pedagogical and managerial role when she refers to herself as 'the eyes and ears of the office', 'the practitioner out there', since the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and nursery manager both spent a great deal of time in the office. She knew she was in charge if they were away; 'when management are out then that's me' (B, LW1). Although she was the only Early Years Teacher in the nursery, there was a teacher in the Children's Centre who had both EYPS and QTS, employed by the local authority.

Making a Difference

On my arrival for the first Learning Walk, Becky had been meeting with a parent of a child with physical disabilities and all our subsequent interactions revealed her confidence in providing support for children with SEN and EAL. She had referred a child for speech and language support, opened a Common Assessment Framework (CAF) procedure and offered to drive the mother to any appointments. Realising that the mother was anxious because she had not previously left the island, Becky arranged support to be available locally instead. In the following extract, Becky reflects both her value-base and her understanding of the specific challenges faced by children and families in her area:

‘Supporting the children... giving these children a little bit of something, like this little boy here. He’s seen things and stuff in the past and it’s made him a really angry child to a point where we had to stop him coming to nursery and we have just started doing forty-five minutes a day and his behaviour has got better since then.’ (B, LW1)

Arguably, this is not because of a desire to make up for disadvantage, but a practical approach to helping him on his way through to the next phase of education: a clearly stated aspiration to make a difference to his life chances.

‘I kind of feel that I’m not doing him any favours. I am trying to help him. He’s going to school in September and the school is not going to put up with that and he will be excluded in a week. It’s a challenging area but that’s kind of why I wanted to work here, because it was challenging and I feel I can make a difference’ (ibid).

She uses the explicit term ‘make a difference’, articulated from the tenets of the NLEY programme, but almost has to remind herself of her belief in her ability to be able to make a difference as she notes that the school environment may not be so accepting. Her empathy is apparent: ‘this area... is very deprived and I feel for a lot of the children – this is the only time they get to do anything or socialise with other children even’ (B, LW1). Becky clearly indicates that ‘making a difference’ is a key value in her identity as a professional.

Managing Places and Spaces

Becky was enthusiastic about changes she had been able to make to the environment in her new role as Senior Practitioner in the pre-school room. She referred to the room as ‘chaos’ when she arrived, which gave her a challenging situation to deal with, although she recognised this may have been because a key member of staff had been on maternity leave.

‘Where do I start? There was no children’s work on any of the walls, no photos anywhere... areas were defined but never changed’ (B, LW1).

Becky’s focus on the importance of a sense of space and purpose in the room was clear to see as we walked around (B, LW1). She had moved furniture to make separate areas

which could be used flexibly, rather than kept to a fixed layout, and an area was deliberately cleared each day for children to choose what they would like to play with: ‘when the children come in we ask them what they would like in this area and today they have chosen the trains’ (B, LW1). Most displays were of children’s work or transcripts of things children had said. Children excitedly shared what they were doing with her. An area of the room was a Polish shop, reflecting the number of children who were from migrant families. Becky referred to this room as being ‘rejuvenated’ (B, LW1) and this was one of the many occasions when she articulated a sense of re-energisation and renewal.

A confident and certain sense of pedagogical organisation was clear in the way she had reorganised and rearranged the room, emphasising children’s choice. The outdoor area was set up in exactly the same way as the indoor area with multiple places where children could choose activities in a free-flow approach. Children and staff moved in and out of the room seamlessly and we became part of the activities as we walked outdoors, watching practitioners and children engaged in a variety of different activities together. She tried to harness the energy of the boys in particular; who were doing ‘a lot of running around’, but profiles showed they struggled with early reading skills. She had created camouflaged reading dens outside with selections of books and log seats. The transcript of the LW records that I saw ‘a very, very stimulating, busy environment. They are all up to something, all doing something... It was bright and cheerful’ (B, LW1). Becky’s delight that an ECERS Report had shown a big improvement in the quality of the environment since the previous year indicated her sense of responsibility for an effective and enjoyable environment.

Becky articulated a concept of free choice underpinned by careful organisation and purposeful activity. Her introduction of a name peg system with symbols, for example, was intended to ensure that children had their own recognisable space and knew the identity of their key person. She shared this vision of independence with parents; it was important for children to develop independent skills before they went to school. ‘Yeah they all have fun. They enjoy it. If you enjoy it they enjoy it’ (B, LW1). This concept of the strong child able to make choices seemed deliberate in the face of her previously articulated concerns about disadvantage.

She had altered planning systems from: ‘an awful lot of recording going on but not much activity’, to a child-centred approach which engaged practitioners. ‘We go on their interests and then in the planning meeting we have on Friday we’ll put it together and run with it.’ (B, LW1). She showed confidence in holistic and cross-curricular approaches and pointed out a maths activity and a craft activity running side by side where children could choose to look at patterns in both. ‘This way is making sure none of the children get missed, whereas I could tell by looking at learning journals that was happening before’ (B, LW1). Her concern about children missing out in some way is another dimension of her desire to make a difference.

By my second visit, the added complication of a proposed expansion of the nursery to accommodate children funded under the 15 hours free for socially disadvantaged two-year-olds meant building an extension on part of the outdoor area. This was not popular with the parents who worked and paid for care and this was worrying Becky. She had not been consulted at all on the planned new provision and was concerned about the limitation which would be placed on the outside area, now buzzing with children and practitioners and lots of purposeful activities (B, LW2). Her emphasis on choice, space and personal autonomy for children did not seem to be replicated within her own role.

Pedagogical Leadership

Becky ascribed her ability to make changes in the pre-school room to the use of a collaborative approach with the four other members of staff there. She used the words ‘we’, ‘working together’ and ‘collectively’ when describing changes made, and the way individual staff members responded to her during our walks reflected a shared and distributive leadership model (B, LW1&2). Apparently, a staff member had asked to move into her room because of the extra support from ‘me and the rest of the girls’ (B, LW1). This was evident in her explanation of the development of a split outdoor area for the toddlers and the pre-school in the garden:

‘We kind of talked about it and we made the decision that actually if we split the garden then it’s better for their children, and within the room obviously I have the ultimate say but I’m all up for giving them [the practitioners] the empowerment because they weren’t having that before, because there wasn’t anyone to give them the choice to make decisions’ (B, LW1).

In articulating this concept of shared leadership, Becky clearly highlights the dichotomy she feels around her role as a pedagogical leader when she talks about her authority in giving practitioners the choice to make decisions. She had focused on introducing changes step by step ‘kind of baby steps, baby steps first’, which indicates the challenges she faced. The use of the words ‘baby steps’ could appear patronising, but perhaps is more likely to be a reflection of the workplace language. Becky thought staff had appreciated the increased structure and stability but recognised it was still a work in progress.

Becky knew that her previous work experiences on the NLEY programme had given her the ability to synthesise ideas and implement change. Although relatively new to the sector, the range of work experiences she had undertaken in a variety of early years settings gave her new insights, compared to those practitioners who had never worked beyond the setting or its isolated community.

‘I know a lot of the staff have been here all of their professional career, whereas I’ve been here, there and everywhere so I have been able to draw together things and come in and put them all together’ (B, LW1).

This extract illustrates how she sees herself drawing together and making cohesive and holistic a fragmented approach.

Her greatest frustration was her perceived limitation of her influence beyond the pre-school room. She knew her base was in the pre-school room, preparing children for school, in spite of an aspiration to be a pedagogical leader across the setting. According to Becky, there was a sense that practice needed improvement elsewhere and this role would have been welcomed by other staff:

‘There was a point when I was going to be coming in [the toddler room] for a week to kind of see what I could do because it was falling apart but then the Chief Executive has said no, I was employed to work in that room and I couldn’t come into this one, which was kind of a shame because they were all up for it, I was up for it, management were up for it and it would have been good for a fresh pair of eyes to come in and see, but the powers above said no’ (B, LW2).

There is an implication in the phrase ‘falling apart’ that she felt that only she could sort out these problems, make them whole, although her repetition of the term ‘up for it’ underlines the idea of wider support for her role set against the reality of a single management veto.

This was a particular source of frustration where the Baby Room was concerned. A local authority Setting Improvement Partner (SIP) visit had left the staff demoralised and confused. Becky had tried to interpret the report for the staff by focusing on the positives first: ‘everyone looks for improvement but if you know what you are doing well first it’s always better’ (B, LW1). However, her attempts to engage in dialogue with Baby Room staff about using the outdoors more effectively were met with resistance. On a bright, warm early spring day, we stood at the door and peered into the hot, dark interior of a small stuffy room where most babies were in cots. She called it ‘disheartening’ (B, LW2).

She described the toddler room as ‘struggling – and no-one’s allowed to help’. The CEO had reminded her, ‘I am three to five and that’s that... don’t worry about it. It’s not your problem’. This was one of the many occasions when she referred to the CEO as ‘the man upstairs’ or ‘the man above’: an almost palpable expression of top down imposition (B, LW2).

Building a Community of Practice

Becky accepted that she had been able to have some indirect influence through her constructive relationships with members of staff in other rooms, although she was becoming more demoralised about her ability to provide a pedagogical leadership role. She recognised the impact of low pay on the practitioners: ‘a lot of these girls are just here because they can’t get anywhere else. None of them want to be here.’ It was disheartening for her that a member of staff that she had ‘taken under her wing’ and supported to get a Level 2 was leaving to get a job in a food packing factory. As we watched children excitedly making giant dinosaur eggs with the practitioner, Becky explained it was because:

‘...she’s getting paid an apprentice rate. Any extra hours she does over her 30 she’ll be paid minimum wage for and they only have a contract for her for 30 hours so they only have to pay her £2.64 an hour’ (B, LW2).

In her experience, low pay undermined and devalued the importance of their work. Becky tried to motivate staff in the pre-school room by encouraging them to go on individual training, such as Every Child a Talker (ECAT), so that ‘everybody feels like they’re an expert in a specific area’. Although successful in part, she felt this suggestion had fallen on ‘deaf ears’ outside her own room and there was always the added complication that most of the staff did not drive and could not access training off site, reinforcing the sense of geographical isolation (B, LW2).

Becky talked confidently about the range of professionals she was dealing with and the way she included parents in all decision- making. She was proud of organising a trip to Legoland for the staff, children and parents as she had managed to keep the cost to £15 per head. In the end very few parents went, but she thought it a great success as many of the children had not been out of the area before. Becky’s efforts to engage parents and staff in collaborative experiential and learning activities foreground the challenge to establishing a learning community when working in isolated communities (B, LW3).

Teacher – what’s in a name?

Becky knew that parents were told that she was a teacher, yet she was referred to as Senior Practitioner on the noticeboard in the entrance to the nursery, her picture sitting below that of the Children’s Centre teacher employed by the local authority in the leadership pyramid. The term ‘teacher’ troubled her.

‘Well obviously I did EYPS and I don’t think I’ll ever call myself an Early Years Teacher because that’s not what I did... I started in the August and a lot of the parents were like oh you’re the teacher, you’re the teacher, they’ve been saying that they’re getting a teacher, you’re the teacher and actually I turned around and said to them actually I’m not a teacher, I don’t have QTS, I’m not a proper teacher’ (B, LW1).

Becky demonstrates disequilibrium over the concept of ‘teacher’ through her constant repetition of the word, while emphasising that this is not how she sees herself because she does not have QTS; she is an EYP, even though she is called an Early Years Teacher. This could reflect either her limited autonomy or power in her current role or

perhaps a concern with the greater perceived expectations inherent in the term 'teacher', because she recognised that some parents attributed a powerful meaning to the word.

'A lot of the pushy parents are like 'oh you're the teacher, you're the teacher, my child's going to be able to do this, that and the other' and that's not what I feel my job is to do' (B, LW1).

At my second visit, Becky's picture on the noticeboard had been re-labelled as Early Years Professional, but in the leadership pyramid it still sat below the picture of the Children's Centre Teacher (CCQT) who now had the label Qualified Teacher. She reported a good relationship with the CCQT who she felt talked to her as an equal about practice, for example regarding the ECERS results. However, as all the CCQTs in the county had been made redundant as a result of local government re-structuring, the teacher was leaving at the end of the week and the nursery would be employing another Senior Practitioner to work with children from birth to three.

In comparison with internal relationships, Becky's relationship with staff in the adjoining school was not so cordial, although the nursery shared a site with the primary school and the outdoor areas were next to each other. For example, Becky reported that she was 'shooed away' when she had asked to borrow an overhead projector. Her use of this term arguably reflected a feeling of dismissal, which indicated not only a division of resources but a perceived hierarchy between the nursery and school.

The geographical isolation was mirrored in a separation between her setting and schools. Becky had taken the lead on organising transition planning for those children going into school by making the role-play area into a school and reading stories about going to school. She worked hard to arrange transition visits to local schools for children and parents:

'We kind of do it as a joint thing but I've had to instigate [them] because the school haven't got time, but I feel they are important so the school has to make time' (B, LW 2).

Some schools were better than others at responding and some teachers had visited the nursery, but it was hard work to organise and the primary teachers were clearly not

prioritising these visits. In Becky's words, the response of one teacher to her request to talk about provision for a child who had intensive one-to-one support was, 'I'll see him in September' (ibid).

As we stood by the fence looking over at the school next door, Becky told me she had recently applied for several jobs as a Reception teacher in Academies, but had not been interviewed:

'I emailed one for an application form and she said, 'Do you have QTS?' and I said, 'Oh, no, I have Early Years Professional Status, which is now Early Years Teacher Status and I have a Masters in Early Years.' And they said, 'Sorry, without QTS, you can't even apply... it's sort of a little bit like, you know, I worked hard to get that and kind of, for what? I can't make any difference with the birth to threes here' (B, LW2).

Becky's feeling of being trapped and helpless was evident as she looked across at the school, so close yet unattainable for her. It reflected the contradictions in the change of title from EYPS to Early Years Teacher discussed in chapter 2 and the implications of external perceptions impacting on Becky's sense of identity and worth.

I asked Becky if what she was doing now was what she had expected for her life when she left University and she became very upset.

'I feel like I am trying to help the others but I can't. I'm feeling, what's the point? Not what's the point, because I am not that sort of person but I've actually been looking into opening my own nursery... I get £18,000 a year to work here... all the nursery staff are on minimum wage. It's all wrong... I'm crying because I'm passionate about it and I know I could do a much better job' (ibid).

Becky's use of the word 'passionate' is notable here in such a negative and emotional situation. Her frustration at the limitations and challenges of her role are obvious, but she also has a strong sense of injustice about the way others are treated too. There is a palpable sense that in spite of her role as an Early Years Teacher and her supposed birth to three pedagogical leadership expertise she was being blocked at every turn. The

Academies she approached were unaware of the Status or her expertise. She later emailed me to apologise:

‘I was getting emotional because I really care for those kids and staff and it breaks my heart that the powers that be upstairs do not see the importance as much’ (Email: 14th July, 2014).

Moving On

By the time of my last short visit Becky was talking about taking the initiative and leaving, ‘walking out the door’ (B, LW3), but by now she recognised the difficulty she might have setting up her own nursery in such a deprived area, as franchises were only really willing to start up in more affluent areas. My previous visit had pushed her into forcing a frank and open discussion with the CEO about her role and identity within the setting and he had asked her to work with a new family liaison officer (Abby), also an Early Years Teacher, preparing a bid to a Trust around parental engagement and early language development. If the bid was successful, the setting would train her in play therapy and she would receive a small pay rise and improved working conditions, although there was a caveat. ‘The play therapy would be paid for, by which there’ll be a condition attached to my contract to say that if I leave within however many years I have to pay the money back’ (B, LW3). She seemed happy to accept this, unaware that this was not something generally enforced in a school environment. Becky was confident of her ability to manage liaison with the Speech and Language Therapy Service and said the project planning was ‘keeping me going’. She seemed re-energised by the idea of the bid and felt that her experience on the leadership programme (NLEY) gave her the resilience and expertise to be able to develop the concept of an Early Language Centre, work out resource, budgeting and write the bid. She was looking forward to working closely with someone who shared her professional approach and background, and for the first time the ease of working within a community of practice of equals becomes explicit in Becky’s description of their approach to writing the bid.

‘Abby and I used a lot of research that we’d already done, because obviously Abby has got EYP as well, so we kind of used our experience and our kind of knowledge together. It was quite nice to have someone likeminded to do it with’ (B, LW3).

Although appreciative of the CEO's attempts to engage her in a project, Becky was disconcerted by his referral to Abby and her in a meeting as 'the clever ones who could do it' (ibid), which she thought was divisive. She was unaware at that time of the very small likelihood of success of such a bid.

On our final walk, she introduced me to a teacher with QTS, who had recently been directly employed by the setting to replace the previous CCQT. The new teacher was on QTS pay and conditions with full holiday entitlement, unlike Becky who was entitled to only four weeks a year. Becky found it particularly challenging that the new teacher had been spending time in the baby room and toddler room, places she herself had never managed to gain effective access to, even though she was an Early Years Teacher with specific expertise in birth to five. She thought it was 'because it looks good for Ofsted that we've got a qualified teacher' (B, LW3), but was not confident about the outcome of this new strategy to employ teachers with QTS in the Nursery. A recently employed qualified teacher (QTS) had only stayed for three weeks:

'Her words to me were, "I can't do this job you do because I am just a teacher." I said to her, "well can you go and tell the CEO that, because every time I ask for a pay rise I get told, no, and you can't do this job because you are not a teacher."' (B, LW3).

Becky is articulating the tensions between Ofsted's views of QTS, the role of an EYP, as originally constructed as an expert in birth to five, and Early Years Teacher, thus demonstrating the confusion around conflicting perceptions and legal requirements. As I left the setting, I noted in my research diary that I saw the new teacher: 'walking around the outside area huddled against the wind with children hanging off her arm as if in a playground. There were no resources or activities visible. It is a bleak winter's day but the contrast with my last visit could not be more apparent.' (Field notes, 9.12.2014)

Becky continues to try to fulfil a pedagogical leadership role appropriate to her training and EYP status, making a difference, but feels restricted and isolated at several levels. She is restricted to one room and defined by both herself and others as 'not being a teacher' (B, LW3); separated by custom and practice from the primary school in spite of their adjoining sites and, lastly, isolated from the wider interchange of ideas and experience in a community of practice because of the relative geographical isolation. At

our last meeting, she tells me that she has applied for a job in the Civil Service. She has now left the setting.

Kate

Context

When I began my research, Kate worked in a large town, employed by the local authority as a Children's Centre Qualified Teacher (CCQT) with QTS. Kate achieved EYPS in 2010. She is a very experienced early years teacher who also has an MA Early Years. By the time of our second meeting, she had received notice of redundancy and was about to leave the Children's Centre. As in the case of Becky's centre, the local authority who employed Kate had made all CCQTs redundant. Although she subsequently had several part-time posts, one of which was a zero hours contract with Adult Education, we thought it best to meet in my office for our last interview. At the time of this meeting, she told me she had just accepted a job as a Foundation Stage teacher in a school.

Spaces and Places

The Children's Centre was situated on the site of a local primary school and, although the school had released the land to enable the centre to be built, the co-location was not without its tensions. On our first Learning Walk, I parked in the school car park, which was almost empty. One of the Children's Centre staff rushed out to tell me to move my car out to the road, as the Head teacher would 'go mad' if I parked there (K, LW1). All CC staff had to park in the surrounding streets and the Head was rigorous in enforcing this rule. It felt a very concrete example of the separation between school and Children's Centre (Field notes, 8.01.14). Kate explained:

'There is definitely a barrier there. It's a strange set up. It's gone through cycles, it's gone through phases where prior to the school becoming an Academy we had ways of working together... but as it is we are now very much Children's Centre and school' (K, LW1).

She referred to this as 'drifting apart' (K, LW2), which almost implies a lack of attention, perhaps on both sides, although the change of school status to Academy was clearly the impetus for this. It mirrored Becky's experience of separation of space and culture between school and Nursery.

Making a Difference

Although Kate's move to work as a CCQT was not a recognised career path to take, she saw it as part of a pedagogical journey of change from a teacher working in the Foundation Stage to a holistic pedagogical leader who could make a difference. Her deeply held belief was:

'that this was the future for education... that was where I wanted to be. I wanted to be looking at the whole sort of family, the whole development of the child and I just knew that Children's Centres would make a difference to young children and families' (K, LW1).

She uses the word 'morph' to describe an irreversible, pedagogical transformational process:

'I've morphed, I almost think of myself, yeah I've kind of... it's not the obvious kind of, it's not the obvious pathway for a teacher to take and I have gradually changed. Where it happened was when I was still in a school environment, I was in a Foundation Stage unit and that's where the scales dropped from my eyes if you like' (K, LW1).

Her use of words which indicate some sort of epiphany - 'scales dropped from my eyes' and 'awakening' - illustrate the magnitude of the change:

'I was, up until that point, a fairly regular teacher. I was a reception class teacher, then we opened up a Foundation Stage unit and I had a lot of my beliefs, a lot of my thoughts and understanding of pedagogy there really questioned and it was uncomfortable, very uncomfortable, and the Foundation Stage leader came in who wanted to bring this together and I remember thinking, "oh but they'll just run wild... how can you let them have all this freedom, how can you let them have all this sort of play opportunities and everything?" It was a real awakening for me' (K, LW1).

The uncomfortableness of this challenge to her existing pedagogical belief system is articulated through the repetition of the word 'uncomfortable', but she recognises how both direct experience and EYPS helped her navigate and renegotiate the different

pedagogical approach used from birth to five in a play-based curriculum, particularly for the birth to three age group:

‘My experience of the birth to the two-year-olds, really came through the EYPS... it really helped consolidate my understanding of that whole range of development of birth to two and that really helped I think when I first came here’ (K, LW1).

Kate understood why she had confidence in her new role, although it had not been easy at the beginning. She recognised that although she was a teacher, her underlying beliefs and value systems were not so different to the Children’s Centre values:

‘I wasn’t coming in as a teacher. You know people were suspicious when I first came in of, “what’s this teacher going to be like? Is she going to be so formal and sort of you make us do everything this way?” kind of thing, so I had to sort of really make sure that people understood where my philosophies lay and where my values lay and then they let me. I had to build up that trust, people had to sort of know where I was coming from if you like and then I was allowed to work in the under-twos room’ (K, LW1).

Her use of the terms ‘they let me’ and ‘allowed’ makes it clear that she almost needed to earn permission before her experience and status gave her the freedom to work as she wanted across the Children’s Centre provision, which is in stark contrast to Becky’s experience of restricted space.

‘I haven’t had to formally invite myself; I can just wander in and out all day every day... I would just work wherever I needed to be, so it could be in the baby room, it could be in the over-two room’ (K, LW1).

Although she had always been involved in outreach work in the community, for example, with childminders, by the time of our second LW she found herself the only CCQT for eight local Children’s Centres. The focus of her work had moved to developing a system to ‘unify the tracking and planning of everything they want to happen across the district children’s centres’ (K, LW2). She described this as ‘my role becoming more of a quality assurance and sort of going around’ (ibid). But she was

confident and enthusiastic about the effectiveness of this approach: ‘It may not be the best tool for the job, but it’s certainly effective’ (K, LW2).

Kate planned this extension of her role into the surrounding area, with ‘a few targeted families’ (ibid). She saw influencing and promoting good practice as part of her advocacy and leadership role:

‘I’m saying all this and I’m getting really enthusiastic and really excited and it’s something that I could lead on and I could also ensure that the other centres in ... are all sort of on board with this’ (K, LW2).

Pedagogy and Identity

The Children’s Centre included a day-care nursery and until recently included a pre-school nursery, but this had now been moved to the school building. We stood in the disused space, which Kate said had been ‘kitted out with the best equipment you could possibly want for an early years setting and space’ and which she now referred to ironically as ‘the glorious empty room’ (K, LW1). Kate recalled discord when the pre-school had been situated in the Children’s Centre as ‘we were almost in competition with each other’ (K, LW1). She described the differing pedagogical approaches vividly:

‘There was a conflict of pedagogies going on between the teacher [in the nursery] and between the setting and there was a real battle if you like... The school setting was quite formal, quite structured, and they had their attainments to reach, they had their targets to reach, they had the charts to tick and they had all the evidence that they had to amass, because you’ve got the school pressure and the head pressure and all the way down, and then you had what we were trying to implement and have implemented here is this value of play, this exploration of freedom and risk-taking and adventure and everything else and the two things I’m afraid just didn’t sit side by side’ (K,LW1).

Kate’s use of terminology reminiscent of a military campaign to describe the school context and culture (‘conflict’, ‘battle’, ‘attainments’, ‘targets’ and ‘charts’), contrasts with her characterisation of practice in the Children’s Centre as ‘freedom and risk-taking and adventure’. She repeats the word ‘pressure’ twice when talking about the school, which emphasises the point (ibid). She was disappointed that she had been

unable to convince the teacher to try a different pedagogical approach, despite ‘a lot of sort of conversations with her’ (ibid), even though she recognised that her own experience as a teacher had helped her to understand the situation and use a shared language that both understood.

‘The person I was talking to recognised that I knew how things were in a school environment. It is about talking the same language; it’s about understanding the pressures that they’re under, and the expectations that they’ve got to meet. But if you’ve been so used to working in schools and you’ve never really come across a nursery... it’s just beyond your, it’s out of your remit, it’s out of your world, you don’t really know what it entails. It’s foreign, I suppose’ (K, LW1).

Her use of the terms ‘out of this world’ and ‘foreign’ conceptualise this cultural dissonance, which was also reflected in her pedagogical passion for the outdoors. We stood and looked at the empty outdoor space where Kate had set up a mud kitchen while she explained that this had been a particular source of disagreement with the nursery teacher: ‘It was quite a tense time and I know if the teacher came out here now she would absolutely hate what she saw now. It was just so diametrically opposed to how she wanted to do it’ (K, LW1).

Kate’s pedagogical philosophy was underpinned by her extensive and varied experience:

‘You have to have seen it in action, you have to believe in the philosophy to be able to do it, but to have those doors open and that sort of beautiful big outdoor space - and now it’s left empty and nobody can use it’ (K, LW1).

Pedagogical leadership

Kate’s articulation of pedagogical leadership was clearly one of confidence and experience, expertise and support:

‘Whatever I’ve introduced it’s either been through training or through one-to-one guidance, talking to them. I’ve always... supported, led the way and then basically slightly withdrawn but always been on hand to support if need be (K, LW1).

Here Kate is signposting the use of mentoring in a participative approach. She also describes quality assuring in a 'gentle and collegial way. If necessary, I would challenge but generally I like to work alongside people and lead by example... We work out an action plan of different things that we can move, that we can nudge the practice forward on' (LW2). Her repeated reference to 'we' and use of the expressions 'support' and 'nudge the practice on' illustrate a careful and collaborative approach, embedded within an affiliative style of leadership.

One of the strengths of the use of the LWs is the way they facilitate and recognise involvement of other staff and Kate's approach was reflected in the narratives of the staff that we met in the setting who recognised her support. For example, one said:

'Lead practice, lead good practice, always, you do. We know. Yeah, just there to support and guide and help. Whenever we need anything Kate is always is there, aren't you?' (K, LW1)

Kate 'worked hard to change the philosophies, the pedagogies of practitioners'. She recognised this as 'very gradual' (K, LW1), describing the same process which Becky refers to as 'baby steps' but using very different language. For example, it had not been easy to change the perceptions of practitioners about using the outdoor area effectively, but Kate had been confident enough in her pedagogical approach to welcome and withstand questioning, argument and debate.

'I've had a lot of times where people have really questioned and argued and sort of explored the whole issues that I'm – that sort of move away from the product and move towards understanding the process and everything else' (K, LW1).

Kate articulated a strong sense of leading by both participating and showing:

'I just know that people take on board things most if, if they – if you're doing it with them, if you're working alongside them, they can see the sense of it, if they can understand the process, if they feel supported every step of the way really' (K LW1).

She was aware of the subtleties of influencing others:

‘I don’t stand up and talk and say “this is the way you’ve got to do it.” It’s all about listening to them and adapting everything I say and do to try to incorporate what they want to see’ (ibid).

Kate’s explanation of the democratic element of leadership was powerfully expressed, perhaps because she had confidence in her own skills and knowledge as a leader.

‘Leadership is about democracy. It’s leading democratically. It’s leading by example. It’s getting involved... I would never expect anyone to do anything if I can’t do it myself’ (K, LW1).

I was curious as to where this confidence in leadership came from, QTS or EYPS perhaps? Kate thought it sprang from her years of experience:

‘I have drawn upon all the different types of leadership skills that I have amassed over the years... it’s me as an experienced practitioner I think’ (K, LW1).

However, she also recognised that the EYPS process had played an important part in this:

‘What EYPS gave me was that leadership kind of quality that I didn’t have as a qualified teacher or Foundation Stage leader – going through the process actually gave me a lot more validation and credence; it made me think like more like a leader and that was partly down to the assessment process... it just consolidated for me everything that I already held on to through my teaching’ (K, LW2).

Here Kate identifies her development and identity as a leader in association with the core principles of the EYPS assessment process: communication, leadership and decision-making.

Multi-Agency Working - an on-tap resource

Kate accepted that she had ‘more of a leadership role here in a wider variety, varied role’ in her multi-professional work with families, midwives, voluntary crèche workers,

health visitors and voluntary services, than just in the day care centre or nursery (K, LW1). In this extract she sees herself as holding together and balancing:

‘the linchpin, I’m kind of the middle-man and I do try and play the balance, I try and explain each other’s point of view and try to keep the communications flowing [laughs]’ (K LW1).

At this point in the Learning Walk, she was talking in front of health workers and was aware of and sensitive to her audience. As we moved away, she explained how she needed to use a strong values-based message in this multi-professional process and reinforce the importance of collaboration:

‘I work hard trying to build links between the two aspects of this building... people really don’t like working together, do they? There is still an element of well they’ve used all the dishwasher stuff, or they’ve used all this, and it’s like oh please we’re all working together to the same aim here, you know we’re working with the families of our community sort of thing’ (K, LW1).

Kate’s animation when talking about her work with parenting groups and practitioners emphasised how much it meant to her:

‘we’ve got our baby clinic... with our health visitor there, and other times it’s a stay-and-play session... we can have parenting courses going on... and I have led new practice through working alongside colleagues and really setting the benchmark I suppose of trying to ensure that we get – I hate to say it, but the quality. I want the quality. The quality experience and the quality sort of environments’ (K, LW1).

Her repetition of the word ‘quality’, which articulates a powerful pedagogical message is almost tempered by the self-deprecatory ‘I hate to say it’ (ibid). Kate felt that being an ‘on tap resource’ was an important part of her role (K, LW2). As we moved through the centre, her enthusiasm and passion for what she had achieved were evident.

‘I suppose parents are always talking to me about it and they’re always saying this is better than any nursery... this role has been a joy to create and develop and if

you consider it, I lead practice with early years practitioners, I lead practice with colleagues from all sorts from the multi-disciplines' (K, LW1).

Not Needed Any More

By the time of my second visit, Kate had received notice of redundancy and was leaving the following month. The Learning Walk was suffused with a sense of frustration, sadness and waste. The words she used were a very powerful representation of loss: 'ripping the heart out', 'completely out the window', 'fall by the wayside', 'fall apart' (K, LW2).

'So how do I feel? ...How does anybody feel when they're being made redundant? They feel as if you know the job that they're doing doesn't really count for anything, isn't valued, so that's always going to be a hard one to get over' (K, LW2).

She saw the new government and local authority policy of targeted intervention as 'a knee-jerk' reaction which was 'stigmatising' to families and mourned the loss of the pro-active multi-disciplinary early years preventative activities which had been universally available to families who 'walked in the door' of the Children's Centre (K, LW2).

'It's coming from a social services background so it's early intervention and early help but it's not really looking into the future, but there is no long term perspective on anything... Being made redundant is just, is so short-sighted and so frustrating and so very, very sad because I'm being made to leave a job I love and value' (K, LW2).

Here she visibly articulates her sadness at the loss of her job, but also her concern at the loss of the multi-disciplinary pedagogical leadership role she so clearly inhabited. She questioned the effect of this on children and families, especially in view of the loss of support and mentoring for practitioners.

'...they're ripping the heart out of Children's Centres and I think they're setting them up to fail and that really worries me because what's going to be left? You're going to have lots of early years practitioners working with the families, with the

most vulnerable families, but they won't have the support, they won't have anybody to sort of talk to, to sound things out, to give them advice' (K, LW2).

At our last meeting, following redundancy, Kate described the various part-time roles she was employed in, including working in a playgroup with traveller children and as an adult education tutor in the 'family learning and parenting arena' (K, Interview 3). Ironically, this role involved working in a similar way with the same families she had been working with when she was a CCQT, but this time employed by the local adult education service on a zero hours contract. Kate thought her QTS had been an important factor in getting this job. 'It was the QTS rather than the Early Years Professional Status'. She found it 'absolutely wonderful and really heartening' (K, Interview 3) to be working with some of the young parents' groups again, but although she thought it good experience she was on a much lower salary, paid only for delivery time and not for preparation time, and received no sick pay or pension.

Identity and the 'Third Thing'

On our first LW I asked Kate how she saw herself:

'I no longer really see myself as a teacher... but then I don't think anybody in my position really would. I don't know. I don't think of myself as being an Early Years Professional either. I see myself as being a third thing. I don't know what it is. I don't think there are that many of us around... but I can really... see so many good qualities there and I'm yeah, I'm so thankful' (K, LW1).

According to Kate, her qualifications and experiences were crucial in this process of integration and transformation to this new place of identity.

'I've taken all of the attributes of teaching and all the skills, all the experience that I've gained over the years of being a teacher, and that's not just in early years, that's right across the spectrum, everything I've learned from the EYP' (K, LW1).

Pedagogical and leadership freedom are identified as core to her practice as a CCQT: 'We've very much been allowed to be creative which is good... because then you actually get a lot of creativity and innovation going on' (K, LW1). Kate was already recognising that there was very limited career progression in her current role or in the

field of multidisciplinary early years work. By the time of our second LW, when she was facing redundancy, Kate had already started applying for other jobs, but was not sure about returning to school because, ‘I don’t think I can handle the politics, the way of viewing early years in schools, which I’m not a hundred percent happy with – you’ve really got to find the right environment’ (K, LW1). She was continuing to question and interrogate her identity:

‘I suppose I think of myself as a teacher, but when I go to the interviews they don’t see me as a teacher and I’ve been out of the teaching environment for too long and they’re not really recognising, or not really understanding how, all of the wealth of experience that I’ve now sort of amassed through my work in Children’s Centres, all the advantages that I could offer, they’re not seeing past that kind of lack of recent teaching experience, so it is really strange when I’m going for interviews, I’m going as this... I use the word I think morphed individual almost’ (K, LW2).

Her hesitance about seeing herself as a teacher is evident in the way she says, ‘I suppose I think of myself as a teacher’ (ibid). Yet when she talks about her role, she clearly articulates the advantages of having QTS:

‘We all came from a very experienced background, you had to be to be able to be a Children’s Centre teacher. We’ve all got a wealth of experience of leadership anyway behind us and teachers... I suppose they have a certain work ethic as well, which is very ingrained in them, they’re very professional people, I am a very professional person, and we will forge our own way forward; I can devise my own action plan, I can action it, I can collect the evidence and I can present it and that’s something – that’s just the skills that we have, or that I have, as a teacher’ (K, LW2).

Interestingly, she attributes her professional approach to being a teacher rather than having EYPS and the competences she lists are action-focused and suffused with autonomy, as represented by her repetition of the word ‘I’ throughout, alternating with ‘we’.

Using the words ‘morphed individual’ to describe how she sees herself almost implies a physical change to this ‘third thing’, which is immutable and cannot be changed back. By the time of our second LW, she constructs this ‘third thing’ more concretely:

‘I’ve got all the skills of a QTS and a teacher but I’ve also got all of the skills associated with an Early Years Professional and the holistic development of the child and the whole family and everything that that offers’ (K, LW2).

Kate found this process challenging because of the perceptions of her Children’s Centre role in schools. Her experience and skillset was not fully appreciated by Heads.

‘They smile and nod and some head teachers think yes, I can see how that would be really useful to have somebody who has a working knowledge of how to raise a CAF, how to be a lead professional, how to work in a multi-agency environment... especially with my work with parents, but... but you haven’t got any recent performance-management... I haven’t been performance-managed for five years, so I have nothing or no evidence of any kind’ (K, LW2).

Her explanation of how this only enhances her as a classroom teacher is said with a self-deprecatory laugh: ‘If they saw past the fact that I haven’t been in a classroom situation, they would see that they’re actually getting quite – two for the price of one [laughs]’ (K, LW2).

‘Just a Teacher’

Kate referred to Children’s Centres as being ‘dragged if you like... coerced towards the school system’ (K, LW2). By the time of our final meeting, Kate had accepted a job as a lead nursery practitioner in a school, paid on QTS scale, and was waiting to start this new role. At her successful interview, she had had to ‘push’ them to recognise that she had achieved EYPS and was an Early Years Teacher. Kate reported that it ‘didn’t really register’ and she had to make them photocopy her EYPS certificate even though they specifically wanted her for her experience with two-year-olds. ‘They just see me as a teacher’ (K, Interview). Her use of the word ‘just’ seems to represent her feeling that only part of her identity will be accessible in this new post. She was apprehensive.

‘I’ve been into the school a few times and it feels so different to the environment that I’m used to, now, for the last six or seven years. I was thinking, oh, this is what it feels like to be back in a school again’ (K, Interview).

Kate conveys not just the different feel of the space and environment, but a broader sense of difference in culture:

‘I know I’ve changed, so I’m really a bit worried, that’s my main trepidation, will I be able to handle the restrictions? I use that word... I do think of it as like that... they’re a lot more officious, I suppose, and accountable and very kind of... just all of the checks that I’ve had to go through and all of the sort of form filling and dotting every ‘i’ ... and it just seems more constrained maybe, I don’t know, we’ll have to see’ (K, Interview).

Kate is trying to explain what could be different in a school context: the words ‘restriction’ and ‘constraint’, together with the ‘officious’, ‘accountable’ approaches, encapsulate her concerns about the different pedagogical approach. She was very clear about her ability to meet the needs of the two-year-olds:

‘I don’t necessarily agree with having two-year-olds in school, however, if they’re going to do it, then they need somebody who understands two-year-olds’ (K, Interview).

However, in the following extract she expresses concern about the loss of pedagogical freedom and how this would impact on her ability to freely develop her practice:

‘I think I’m going to miss the freedom, not so much the freedom I have within my post and my role, but the freedom within an early years practice. I’m now used to working very much in the private PVI settings, or in day care, and there you have a whole more of a sort of freedom to move your practice into different directions, whereas in school, you’re very much, it was palpable, that feeling of top down, where you’ve got to try and make a difference to the children academically and move them on, you know, and train them up so that they can move through the school nicely’ (K, Interview).

Her use of the words ‘train’ and ‘move through the school nicely’ reflect an order and constraint which is in stark contrast to her repeated descriptions of ‘freedom’ of practice in the Children’s Centre where she felt far less restrained. Even though her new Head was early years trained and should be sympathetic, Kate worried about how she would fit in to the more formalised approach in school and how she would react to challenges to her pedagogy because of the way she herself had changed:

‘I’ve realised, quite considerably, that my practice really is quite different now to how it was, you know, seven or eight years ago when I was a teacher within a foundation stage unit. I’ve had the opportunity, the wonderful opportunity to try things... let’s do this, let’s do this for a few months and see how that affects the ambience of the setting. I’ve had that lucky opportunity and I will have more constraints put upon me. I will still have opportunities to nudge practice and to make it more into something that I’m feeling really comfortable with, but it will take a lot longer’ (K, Interview).

Her use of the term ‘nudge’ here is an interesting articulation of the way she has exercised pedagogical leadership. Although naturally apprehensive about her prospective role as a pedagogical leader in school, Kate expressed clearly the self-confident and reflective approach to her own development:

‘I’ve got to keep growing, I’ve got to keep moving forward. I am not perfect. There is loads more that I want to learn’ (K, Interview).

In spite of her assertions in the first LW that she no longer sees herself as a teacher, as she prepares to return to the school classroom she explains her transformation from a ‘teacher that is there to teach’ (K, Interview):

‘I’ll bring to the practitioners that I work with first, and to the parents as well... a deeper understanding of what it really means to nurture children, to spend time with children. Not to teach, but to create that environment where you are listening, listening to the children and really make it more child-centred, put the child at the heart, really. That’s what I want to do and that’s what I think the EYPS... Yes, it’s really made me... I’ve changed so much (K, Interview).

The place of EYPS in constructing her identity and her core pedagogical values are clearly expressed because Kate is articulate and experienced. Our last correspondence revealed she had left her post in school after a short time: 'Interestingly and frustratingly there was and is a clash of pedagogies – which sadly I am unable to resolve' (email 03.06.2015).

Maddie

Context

When my research began, Maddie had just accepted a job as a lecturer in the Early Years department at a large university to teach on a Foundation degree. She had been working as an EYP in a Children's Centre attached to a school, but funding cuts meant that her job had been discontinued. A recent graduate from outside the sector with a Language and Business Degree, she had achieved EYPS in 2011, followed by an MA in Early Years in 2012, through a programme designed to attract high-achieving graduates from other academic disciplines to the sector. We conducted the Learning Walks in the university building. The first walk took place during her first month of work and her role in the Children's Centre was very fresh in her mind. She was grappling with her new role as a lecturer in addition to her identity as an EYP and now Early Years Teacher. In contrast to the Learning Walks with other research participants, we did not interact with many other members of staff or students while we were walking around.

Places and Spaces

We started the first Learning Walk in Maddie's shared office

'Oh I love this office and I've got the best desk in the office. I really love this desk. My other office wasn't as nice as this.... You can see there's loads of marking that needs doing on my desk... I haven't marked any. I've read through them
(M, LW1).

Maddie's sense of place included familiarity and difference, indicating the duality of her feelings as she transitioned from practitioner/student to full-time member of staff in the university. Although her reference to the marking indicated a lack of confidence in an aspect of her new role, it was clear that having her own, named place was an important part of constructing her identity as a lecturer and was a physical representation of that role:

'It is lovely and I do feel at home here because I was a student here... It was very weird the first time I walked through the door and thought this is where I used to timidly knock on the door and wait for someone to let me in to have a tutorial here, and now I am actually here and my name is on the door and that's really bizarre'

(M, LW1).

During this first LW, Maddie felt more at home in the particular campus building where she had studied. However, throughout subsequent walks it was evident that she embraced the expanding physical horizons of her role, portraying the university as ‘offering lots of opportunities to share on a wider scale’ and describing her involvement in teaching, learning and research activities across the campus network (M, LW2).

Communities of Practice

Maddie had a strong sense of interlocking communities of practice, which played a significant role in her life and formed part of her sense of identity. The university fulfilled the role of an extended community of practice for Maddie in her roles as an Early Years Teacher and as a lecturer in the traditional sense of access to research, CPD and so many people around to ‘bounce ideas off’ (M, LW 2). Maddie described some of the research days as:

‘...feeling inspired because you’ve got an idea of the bigger picture. I think they are fantastic for realising why you are here. The students are really, really important and teaching them is really important, but it’s not just about that and the research days remind you that there’s lots of exciting things going on’ (M, LW2).

She also identified her part in developing communities of practice within her student groups by, for example, manipulating the membership of discussion groups in teaching sessions to facilitate the building of dialogic teaching and learning. ‘I think it’s really important that the students have the opportunity to build and share their practice and kind of build in that way’ (M, LW2). These communities of practice were not always controlled or owned by her but were fluid and she recognised the concept of invitation to those communities.

‘I feel part of a community of practice within a university but I’d like to think that I’m part of other people’s community of practice, like the students that I know and if, hopefully, they were to think about who’s within their community of practice they might include me’ (M, LW2).

She saw Early Years as an extended community of practice and was still in touch with colleagues from her course and from the Children's Centre. 'I guess I still feel part of that world' (M, LW3).

Making a Difference

Maddie's pedagogical approach was complex and multi-faceted in her dual roles as an Early Years Teacher and a lecturer. She had worked in the campus nursery during her undergraduate degree and found it a very rewarding experience: 'I knew that it was a way to make a difference to someone's life' (M, LW1). As with Becky and Kate, Maddie's identification of 'making a difference' as a motivation is a key underpinning to both her pedagogical base and her sense of identity. This theme was strongly represented in the Learning Walks. Here she highlights the importance of research and evidence-based practice:

'I think this is an important thing to be doing... You know the research, you know the research from Frank Field and Graham Allen that if you want to make a difference you've got five years...so it's that kind of knowledge that is really, it's really important if you want to make a difference and I really do' (M, LW2).

The repetition of the word 'really' and the use of the word 'I' emphasises Maddie's personal commitment to the concept of intervening early to make a difference to outcomes for children and families.

She thought that Children's Centres were an ideal place for this intervention. During her first placement in a Children's Centre on the NLEY programme, Maddie had worked with two-year-olds and their families from areas of social deprivation who were in receipt of free funding for 15 hours in an early years setting.

'It was then that I realised that Children's Centres were really important and that you could make a difference and the earlier you make a difference the more effect you are going to have' (M, LW1).

Her later employment in a Children's Centre as an EYP was all about making a difference: 'I was responsible for targeted sessions so I was responsible for narrowing the gap' (M, LW1).

Maddie represents this concept of making a difference as part of her individual responsibility to her students:

‘I’ve got an awful lot of respect for them and I know they are working incredibly hard in the settings doing a full time job and a degree and they’ve all got a family life and I would just hate the feeling of letting them down’ (M, LW1).

Eyeing the large pile of marking she expressed this responsibility: ‘I did wake up in the middle of the night thinking, oh my god, if they’ve done badly in their assignments this is going to be my fault and what if I’ve failed them?’ (M, LW1). Repeated use of the phrases ‘I was responsible’, ‘letting them down’ and ‘what if I’ve failed them?’ demonstrate how seriously Maddie takes her new role and her responsibility to students.

Pedagogy: Evidence-Based Practice

Maddie’s pedagogical focus embraced evidence-based practice, which demonstrated recognisable impact. The sessions that she had set up in the Children’s Centre were delivered in conjunction with reception classes in two different schools to promote children’s learning and development through specially designed activities for children and their parents, which she set up, delivered and monitored.

‘The aim was to promote to parents the kind of activities they could be doing at home to boost the children’s learning and development, so the children that were selected were the children that were achieving at a lower rate than most of their peers. But the sessions did have an impact, because at the end of the reception class when the teachers had to complete their foundation stage profiles, the children that had attended the sessions had made accelerated progress in comparison to the children who were asked to attend and didn’t’ (M, LW1).

This impact-driven and accountable focus on what works is very much part of Maddie’s pedagogical approach. When talking about her lecturing style, she used the term ‘woolly’ to describe her distrust of unfocused and unsubstantiated conceptual ideas (M, LW2).

‘Everything that I’m referring to has a reference that people can go away and read because I don’t like talking about things that are really woolly, I want them to have a reference to build upon’ (M, LW2).

This could be attributable to her background in business. She described how her approach to evidence and audit from her business degree was useful to the Children’s Centre during Ofsted: ‘When we had Ofsted in... I had a bit of a reputation at the centre and the school of being a bit computer savvy, so they could give me data or reports and I could analyse it and create graphs and pull out the statistics and all of that stuff that I’d really learnt from doing a business degree’ (M, LW1). She soon found herself earmarked to fulfil this role in the adjoining school. Her willingness was another factor. ‘My manager would say, and she actually did say, Maddie does all the stuff I don’t want to do’ (M, LW1).

The Reflective Practitioner

Maddie thought that ‘EYPS has definitely instilled the importance of being a reflective practitioner’ (M, LW2), but in this extract she identifies one of the realities of reflection in practice.

‘We had to reflect on the sessions, however, a lot of the people I was working with were very anti reflecting on anything that hadn’t gone well. So although we could talk about it, in terms of written communication there was no way on earth, they would never write anything that hadn’t gone well’ (M, LW2).

She found it ‘lovely to reflect with other people’ in the university’ (ibid), although the use of shared PowerPoints for standardisation purposes in teaching and learning was more problematic. ‘I find it incredibly hard to do because ...it means I can’t put much of myself into it... the handouts give more idea of what’s important to me’ (M, LW2). This personal investment of herself and reflective approach appears as a key part of her professional identity as both an EYP and a lecturer.

Multi-Professionalism and Extended Impact

Even though Maddie talked about the range of professionals she worked with in the Children’s Centre: ‘PCSOs, midwives, health visitors, social workers, teachers’

(M, LW1), she didn't see her role as an EYP as necessarily working with agencies, but was very comfortable in the university where the early years department consisted of an integrated team. She saw EYPS as key in helping her understanding of the effect of professional heritages on practice.

‘Yes, I guess, definitely from EYPS having that appreciation that people are coming from different perspectives. For example, when I'm talking to Jill [a nurse] about a student, she really is concerned for their welfare and I think that's kind of like a health thing. She really does think about... that they're okay generally and their well-being's okay, whereas my first thought is the academic side of it’
(M, LW2).

Maddie understood that her role in building relationships with parents in the Children's Centre was an essential part of an extended impact that stretched beyond those targeted sessions:

‘I don't think that's because what we managed to do in those four one-hour sessions made all the difference, but we kind of instilled into the parents in those four hours the kind of things they might be able to do at home’ (M, LW1).

This concept of influence beyond the setting was replicated in her description of conducting joint home visits with the co-located school Foundation Stage staff. It also formed part of a conceptual pedagogical leadership extending beyond the university course parameters and out into the settings of the students that she taught. In this way she could be a pedagogical leader in a broader sense. Initially, Maddie had difficulties in terming this concept as one of leadership and constructed it as a collaborative model:

‘I don't feel I am leading, it's more about communicating with others and having that confidence to approach them’ (M, LW2).

However, when she talked further about her role as a lecturer, it was apparent that she constructed this as a model of pedagogical leadership through her use of professional and academic discussion with students. She wrestled with this particular relationship, using constructivism to throw light on this process: ‘You've got all these kind of minds that are helping form ideas, that's I suppose constructivism in terms of using their

knowledge or working with them to kind of form bigger opinions' (M, LW2). However, she also represented this relationship in a less dialogic way:

'Yes, so like at the moment, I'm just marking assignments for a module called Quality, Learning & Teaching, where they all had to go out and do a piece of research... So there are all these reports that are talking about, 'What is quality in early years? What are they doing to improve quality in their setting?' and they've based those reports on what I've told them for five sessions' (M, LW2).

Her use of the term 'what I have told them' is supplemented by her description of bringing certain resources, for example 'particular literature or ideas or concepts' (ibid), to their attention: 'Some of the improvements that they've done for these reports, I've had an input into... and that's really lovely' (M, LW2). This is a clear statement of power and influence and she sees the role of EYPS enabling her to continue to influence the sector through her student/practitioners:

'The module I am teaching at the moment, it's called Professional Identity, Leadership and Management, and there's EYPS coming into it a lot and Early Years Teacher Status. Getting students to think that they can be visionary and they can exert change, even though they think they don't but they do' (M, LW2).

This influence beyond her setting is about empowerment in the face of a society that Maddie feels does not value the early years workforce as professionals.

'They don't feel valued, they don't feel like they've got a professional status, they don't feel valued in terms of their perhaps place not in the workforce but in wider society. They don't feel valued in terms of how much they get paid' (M, LW2).

Repeating the phrase 'they don't feel valued' three times reinforces the strength of Maddie's feelings about this issue.

Professional Identity and EYPS/Early Years Teacher Status

Maddie describes a bumpy and uneven ride in her route to her current role as an Early Years Teacher and lecturer. She portrays herself as confident and resilient at the outset,

which she attributes in part to the role that her undergraduate studies played in developing her resilience:

‘I think... spending a year abroad in Vienna and having to do everything in German, find accommodation in German and all those kind of issues. When you come back and have to do them in English ... it’s actually whatever you have to do at least it’s in English [laughs]’ (M, LW1).

Her Business Studies experience was also particularly important in constructing her as a professional:

‘That business background I think that gave me perhaps I don’t know I’d like to say some kind of extra professionalism in terms of what an employer might be looking for, so I think that it did make a difference’ (M, LW1).

She was very sensitive to the way she might be perceived by the sector as someone constructed as a leader but with little experience, even though she had worked in a nursery. She didn’t want to ‘come across as really cocky and know it all’ (M, LW1). Here she articulates her thinking on the way she approached this:

‘I never went into any placement pretending or giving the impression that I knew it all, or in fact that I knew very much, because I think that’s quite a good way to alienate yourself [laughs], but instead came at it from the point of view that I’m here to learn. I don’t think I ever told anybody in any of my placements that my course was called New Leaders’ (M, LW1).

The expression that comes to mind when hearing Maddie talk about her experience of joining the sector is very much one of below the radar: quietly, stealthily and avoiding confrontation. But this was also grounded in her perception of herself as lacking practical experience, compared to ‘other practitioners’ and evidenced by her repetition of the word ‘learn’: ‘I was definitely inferior to them in terms of skills and knowledge and I didn’t want to come across any other way really. I wanted to learn from them and not alienate myself’ (M, LW1). She recognised she could be a ‘fresh pair of eyes’ (ibid), but understood the sensitivities of the situation: ‘sometimes people know things aren’t right or could be better but if you’re working forty hours a week it’s having the time or the commitment or the motivation to do anything about it’ (M, LW1). Building

relationships and being part of a group were the most important factors for her, exemplified by her repetition of not wanting to ‘alienate’ herself.

‘Don’t Mention EYPS’

Maddie was employed as a play worker in a Children’s Centre when she achieved EYPS, and was immediately offered a pay rise to the next grade. However,

‘My manager said we’ll pay you as an EYP but don’t mention you are an EYP to any of the other members of staff because you’ve come in and you don’t want to be seen as you know overtaking them, so I was an EYP but I wasn’t recognised’
(M, LW1).

This concept of ‘overtaking’ almost had an element of unfairness and her response to how she describes her current job is interesting in light of this previously enforced denial of her status:

M: I say I work in a university. And then I might say I’m a lecturer in a university.

R: But you are

M: Yeah I know I am, but it just seems a bit unbelievable so I am more likely to say...

R: Why does it seem unbelievable?

M: Because I just can’t believe I’ve got here... when I tell people, ‘oh I’m a lecturer’, you can see that their faces say how has she managed that?’

(M, LW1)

By the time of our second LW six months later, Maddie recognised that this might be how other people feel in a new role, rather than something specific to herself. ‘I think I’ve found since I last spoke to you that’s how a lot of people feel’ (M, LW2) but she still felt insecure, in spite of her constant repetition of the words ‘do it’.

‘I do want to be known as a lecturer, I do feel that’s what I do and what I can do but it just seems a little unrealistic. I’m very proud of doing it and I think I can do it and I work incredibly hard to be able to do it’ (M, LW2).

Here she attributes her tentativeness to a lack of extensive practical experience. 'I think I view them (lecturers) as having a lot more experience in the field than I've got. They're basing what they say upon more knowledge than I've got, more experiences than I've got' (M, LW2). Interestingly, this is exactly how she felt as an Early Years Teacher.

Maddie also articulated with enthusiasm the essential synergy created between practice and theory in her analysis of her role as a lecturer:

'I feel quite... I don't know, excited, exhilarated to be up there. It's lovely to talk to people and it's amazing to see them writing stuff down that I'm saying – that's incredible – and it's lovely to have lovely conversations about ... because they know, the students know a lot more about practice than I do, but I know more academic and theoretical knowledge than they've got, so I think we make a really good team in sharing that and building up experiences' (M, LW1).

She recognises the interaction of her theoretical knowledge with their experience, although even here she is aware of her limited experience of practice.

By the time of our last LW, Maddie recognised that she had 'come a really long way within that year', using the metaphor of a journey to signal her own acceptance of her designation as a lecturer. 'I feel like I've got a much stronger sense of who I am. I'm feeling more confident in my abilities. So I would say now that I am a lecturer and that's really cool' (M, LW3).

EYPS, Early Years Teacher Status and QTS

Maddie recognised the impact of EYPS on her pedagogy, although she initially said little about her transition from EYPS to Early Years Teacher or her relationship with teachers with QTS. In our last two Learning Walks she talked more about this. She had not referred to herself as an EYP because of the steer from her manager, but 'I relate more to having EYPS than EYTS because EYPS was the standards I worked towards' However she recognised EYPS as a '...woolly term. So if you are talking to parents, for example they are not going to know what an EYP is' (M, LW2).

The term 'professional' became a word of significance in her identity: 'I like the idea of being a professional in the field more than I like the idea of being a teacher in the field' (M, LW2). This external validation was an important cornerstone of her identity and meant that students could 'trust me because I've got this' (ibid):

'I see it as giving me, I suppose, credibility in the field and validity that I do know what I'm talking about. I am an EYP and that's how I've got that knowledge to talk about effective practice' (M, LW2).

Maddie recognised that students from settings had very limited awareness of both EYPS and Early Years Teacher Status: 'when I am talking about leadership no-one's really mentioned EYPs or Early Years Teachers having that role' (M, LW3). She used the EYPS longitudinal study to engage them in thinking about 'the barriers to exerting change as an EYP' (M, LW2).

I wondered whether she was happy to call herself an Early Years Teacher, but she was troubled by the visual image the word 'teacher' created when she thought back to the parents who used the Children's Centre.

'The idea of having teachers with QTS who stand at the front of a classroom and me, it's very different. I think it might be intimidating for those parents who thought I was a teacher, because there were people who would happily come into the Children's Centre, yet you mention the school and you could see a barrier is created' (M LW2).

Although 'teacher' actually engendered more respect: 'people might have given me more respect because they thought I was a teacher' (M, LW2), using the term could alienate 'the real teachers in the school because they would have known that I wasn't a teacher like they were a teacher' (ibid). This is very interesting use of the term 'real', which clearly indicates that she does not see herself and would not want to be seen by others as a traditional teacher.

Maddie had not experienced individual barriers working closely with the Foundation Stage teachers:

‘we were really close with [the staff] because you know we had the same children so it made sense to have those links and we could say. so-and-so’s going to be starting with you, we’ve known them since they were six months old’ (M, LW2).

Here she really underlines the close knowledge of each child that she and the other FS staff shared. However, she recognised that the relationship between the Children’s Centre and the school was not straightforward. She experienced a similar divide to Becky and Kate, although she saw it as a distinction rather than a divide:

‘there was definitely... not a divide in terms of a negative divide, but there was a distinction between whether you worked in the Children’s Centre or whether you worked in the school, but we shared the same building, I’d talk to the same people every day, eat my lunch with them’ (M, LW1).

Teachers outside the Foundation Stage in the school could be more dismissive; ‘we were just Children’s Centre and they were teachers’ (ibid). The distinction was emphasised when a new manager ‘who wasn’t from an Early Years background’ modelled the perception that teachers had higher status in pedagogical matters.

‘He would often go away and come back with an idea from the Foundation Stage teachers and almost be like well this idea has come from a teacher so it must be good, so it got quite frustrating’ (M, LW1).

So could Early Years Teacher Status bridge that gap? Maddie thought QTS and EYPS were quite different in conception:

‘I don’t think I would be particularly envious of someone who was a teacher [QTS] now. I think it would be quite hard...I think the EYP has more of an emphasis on being a leader and looking at the Early Years Teacher Standards more of that is related to... synthetic phonics, mathematics and things like that’ (M, LW3).

In her analysis of the move to schools, she inadvertently revealed the worth in her eyes of Early Years Teacher Status versus QTS:

‘So there is this clear link between quality and qualifications, so objectively, perhaps it might look like it makes sense that, if you want to raise the outcomes for two-year-olds, you put them in a place where people have the best qualifications, which is in schools’ (M, LW3).

However, she was worried that those with QTS may not have the skills to make appropriate provision even though schools could appear to have better resources and facilities:

‘Early Years Teachers have got that 0-5 overview, if they're within early years settings, but if children are going into schools where teachers have got a PGCE then that won't have covered that earliest time in a child's life’ (M, LW3).

She understood government intention behind the renaming of EYPs as ‘Early Years Teachers’ ‘to try and raise the status’ (M, LW3) but thought this would ultimately have a detrimental effect in the sector:

‘I do think it's going to undermine the early years workforce that are trying to professionalise themselves if they're not recognised as being capable of taking two-year-olds in their settings because the school would be a better place for them... however, perhaps we know that people are less likely to work in early years settings even though they want to, because they're hardly going to get any pay... If they wanted to earn money, ‘they've got to be teachers [with QTS]’ (M, LW3).

The importance Maddie gave to her practical experience in the Children’s Centre and its role in constructing her identity was reflected in the way she privileged such discussion during the Learning Walks. She was also aware of her potential influence beyond the University, particularly as her confidence developed during the year of the research project. Her focus remained on ‘People's individual needs, and even though you might see them for two hours a week in a lecture, that's a very small proportion of their life’. She compared this effect with an early years setting, where you ‘might see a child for six hours a day, but you don't know what's happening when they go home, or what's happened before they come in’ (M, LW3).

It was striking how Maddie continued to focus on her previous role even when talking about her work as a lecturer. She compared this to seeing children for a short time in an early years setting, yet potentially having some influence alongside home life.

Gael

Context

Gael is a childminder who has worked in her home since 1995. At the time of my research, 17 different children were at her setting at some point during the week. She achieved a BA Early Years through distance learning in 2010 and became an EYP in 2011. As part of her EYPS programme, she completed a level 5 award in management from the Institute of Leadership and Management. Ofsted rated her setting as 'Outstanding'.

I first approached Gael after I had seen a photo and article about her as an EYP in a national newspaper and subsequently met her at a local COP event. Gael was the Vice-Chair of a professional early years organisation when my research started and by the time of our last LW she had become Chair. All the Learning Walks were conducted at Gael's house, which had been specially adapted over the years as a child-minding setting. As this was her home, I did a preliminary visit just to familiarise us both with the concept of a LW in such an environment and endeavour to ensure that it was not a disruptive or intrusive process. On our first Learning Walk an assistant, Kim, was working with her, but during the second and third Learning Walk she was alone. These LWs were more challenging to transcribe, although fascinating to listen to, as they are so full of interactions with the children.

Spaces and Places

Gael's child-minding setting was a semi-detached house, which had been custom-adapted over the years. It had a large sitting room full of comfortable furniture and a kitchen that was a focal point for activity. Gael had made a small office area in the corner of the sitting room for all the administration related to her work. The setting had a specially adapted outdoor area used in all weathers.

'There's no out from there... that's a solid wall over there so it's all enclosed so they can go out there quite safely and I can leave this door open and they are in and out. We take the little ride-ons out there and they can zoom around and burn off some energy as well... and of course if it is raining we've got little umbrellas and wellies' (G, LW1).

Gael had also purchased a large car to enable her to collect children from school and to take trips out which enabled her to extend the setting 'over there' into other places, such as a local airfield:

'...the children just love it because we can just park on the field beside the air strip there, and we take balls, and I've got a big colourful parachute and we take that... so you know we have a picnic and they play and we watch the aeroplanes and it's just really natural stuff, but they just get so much out of it' (G, LW1).

Her setting was not limited by the physical space in the house or garden but had a feeling of expanding out into the locality.

It was clearly a home and a business. Unlike Becky or Kate's place of work, the setting was also Gael's home and full of pictures and objects that related to her family. In my research notes I had written 'this was brought home to me when we looked at a beautiful cross stitch Gael had worked in memory of a son she had lost in infancy' (Field notes, 17.01.14). Not surprisingly, Gael found it difficult to differentiate between her home and her workplace, because she was in the same physical space. Her use of the term 'blurred' signifies this:

'I think this job is so much more than eight until six each day so I need, because it gets blurred enough anyway you know right up into my evenings if I'm doing stuff... or putting the pictures up, you know it gives a little glimpse of what we do to cover the EYFS' (G, LW1).

She had to physically separate herself at times so she did not actually see evidence of her child-minding job in her sitting room.

'So, what I've tried to do as well is contain it [childminding equipment] to this half of the room, so that in the evenings if myself and my other half are sat there, I mean we're just sort of like chilling or watching telly or whatever, it's all behind us so I'm not looking at it all the time' (G, LW1).

In Gael's case, the boundary between her professional and personal identity was a source of tension which she tried to make invisible. But she recognised how important

the sense of ‘home’ was for her families. ‘When they come in most people say that it’s the atmosphere of the place and that they feel immediately comfortable’ (G, LW3): She thought this more important than qualifications. ‘I mean, you could go somewhere that’s got the highest qualifications going and if you don’t feel comfortable there then...’ (ibid). Gael’s strong sense of professional space and place was embedded within an identity of ‘comfortable’ and ‘home’.

The ‘Natural’ Approach – a pedagogical choice

When Gael described her trips out with the children, she used the words, ‘it’s just really natural stuff’ (G, LW1), a narrative of naturalness which is reflected throughout the LWs. In this extract she explains:

‘It’s about what we can give the children and that we can give them those experiences, that life experience and that learning that they can get in a natural home environment through play and through having fun and through interacting with other children’ (G, LW1).

Those ‘natural’ experiences reflected an integrated, home-based pedagogical approach. She thought this ‘natural’ approach may have come from her own childhood when she found herself caring for younger siblings following the death of her father.

‘... if you look at the things that are projected now as good for children like outside playing and the healthy eating... and natural play a lot of it comes back to.... that was my childhood, so it’s like skipping that chunk in between that had all the computer play and television and that and it’s going back to my childhood which was playing outside and doing all those great things’ (G, LW1).

In spite of remembered difficulties, she presents an idealised view ‘doing all those great things’. This ‘naturalness’ could imply a type of casualness and unprofessional approach, but although there are implicit tensions between the concept of naturalness and professionalism, clearly Gael positions herself as a professional on a continuum.

Part of this professional, pedagogical approach was a conscious strategy to help children to socialise with each other through role modelling and intervention:

‘The group that we’ve got they quite often they will see each other two or three times in the week and they just get on so well together... and they’re seeing as well how we’re interacting with each other and respecting each other in the way we talk to each other,. – you know there’s always going to be squabbles between children – but we’re able to support them in playing together still to work through it’
(G, LW1).

These approaches are all part of her strong identity as a professional who provides a model of home.

Gael was confident in her use of EYFS and I explored this a little more with her:

G: I can interpret it how I want.

R: You don't feel you have to justify it to anybody?

G: I used to before I had the training and the knowledge myself. Because I've got that knowledge and I'm confident in my base knowledge, if you like, then I can, if I'm challenged about ‘why are you doing that?’ I can say why I'm doing it. I can back it up with the theory behind it, so, yes.’

(G, LW 2).

Her embedded understanding of theory and practice through ‘training and knowledge’ were vital in her ability to interpret the EYFS in her chosen way with the autonomy of a childminder. An essential part of this pedagogical approach was a freer approach to planning, which reflected a more ‘natural’ approach, although she was aware that there was considerable expertise behind it:

‘I have to do my own planning, whether it's written or not and if it's not written it doesn't make it any less valid. Because like just now, doing that baking or painting, or going out on the trip to the Abbey and planning to take the animals with us, you know, that didn't happen by accident. That's... thinking of what the children enjoy, what really motivates them and what makes it fun for us as well, because if I wrote all my plans, there wouldn't have been that trip’ (G, LW2).

Her ability to be flexible, spontaneous and responsive to the children and to take opportunities as they arose was part of her of her identity as a childminder: ‘I'd rather be

doing them [activities] than writing. I'm a spontaneous person and I like to do that sort of thing' (G, LW2). As her own manager, she had the freedom to do that in her own home.

A central part of Gael's pedagogical practice related to her relationships with parents and families; she appeared as flexible and responsive as she was with children. She referred to her 'responsibility to the families' (G, LW3) when she talked about her practice. It is clear that this role meant a great deal to her as she gave examples of how parents appreciated her approach:

'Sophie's mum is very vocal in how much support I've given her to settle down. It's the first time that she's left Sophie and she's two so it's been a big thing for her (G, LW3).

'Quite often I'll have parents say can I just pick your brains can you do this, you know they soon pick up on that I'm the source of knowledge for those problems' (G, LW1).

Her expert role as a source of support and advice was clearly fundamental in her professional identity. She recognised that parenting could be isolating and her role as a helping 'expert' clearly motivated her:

'I love it when I'm able to do something and help them and it solves something that they are battling against because parenthood can be such a battle sometimes... so yeah that's what keeps me doing this all the time' (G, LW1).

'I know some childminders they have meetings, they go out for meals with the parents, they pop around for the evening. I don't do that. I like to be friendly but professional' (G, LW2).

Throughout, Gael exuded a pedagogical confidence evidenced in her repetition of the word 'confidence': 'I feel confident in myself... and doing the EYPS has given me that confidence' (G, LW2).

In the next extract, this is attributed to the fusion of theory and instinctual practice:

‘I have an understanding of child development. That’s really important and that, the degree and doing the EYPS gave me a lot deeper understanding... a lot of what I was doing was done by instinct, but doing the study gave me such a deeper understanding of what and why things were happening and why they were doing things’ (G, LW1).

This confidence was also grounded in her comfortableness within her home setting. ‘I like to have that independence and knowing that what I’m offering is good quality. You know, I’m confident in what I’m doing’ (G, LW2).

Pedagogical Leadership

Although Gael enjoyed the autonomy of her role, child minding can be an isolated activity with limited opportunity for pedagogical leadership of others, so Gael valued the role of Kim, her assistant, in giving her an opportunity to lead practice:

‘My working as a childminder has changed slightly because I’m now also her – I wouldn’t say her boss, but you know, I’m responsible for an adult in a setting’ (G, LW2).

Kim had previously been registered as a childminder herself, but when they started working together she ‘was just so comfortable and you know that’s where she wanted to be, so she actually gave up her registration’ (G, LW1). Gael’s use of the words ‘comfortable’ and ‘where she wanted to be’ represents her perspective on their relationship, although I did not hear Kim’s perspective on an arrangement that gave Gael logistical and practical help.

‘I think working with Kim has encouraged me to do more of that [painting] because it’s something that I always thought oh no, I’ve got to get the paints out and then I’ve got to clean up after, but it’s so much easier when you’ve got two of you to do that’ (G, LW1).

On the last LW, Gael talked about whether she would find a replacement for Kim, who was moving on as her child would be going to school. ‘My thinking is, going forward, do I go back to working on my own? Which I’m more than happy to do... Or, do I look for an assistant’ (G, LW3). It became clear for the first time that Kim was Gael’s son’s

partner and it was a family relationship as well as a working one. This brought a new perspective on the 'comfortable' relationship with Kim, and perhaps gave a different dimension to Gael's pedagogical leadership in what was a family business. The fact that Gael had not mentioned this before seemed part of a need to professionalise her relationship with her assistant, but was also symptomatic of Gael's pedagogical approach that a close family relationship should be a part of this. Her use of the terms 'forward' and 'back' in the extracts above are interesting here, signalling perhaps the sense of conflict in her mind about grasping both the practical and conceptual dimensions of such leadership.

Although from the outside this relationship had appeared seamless and I noted the 'synchronicity' of it (Field Notes, 17.01.14), Gael had not been without doubts about it: 'She's family and I was concerned that we might clash, that there might be issues and that it could actually spoil the family relationship. So there was lots of risks there.' But there had been 'no falling out, we've worked so well together' (G, LW3).

Her thinking around a replacement for Kim highlighted a concern that her own way of working in her own house could be challenged because of the nature of her work. Her use of the word 'my' in the next extract is significant in making a clear statement of ownership.

'You're doing it with somebody else, as well, you know, child minding is so personal. Not only is it my house, the way that I work, which I would be quite happy to work with somebody else in that respect, because I know that I would probably recognise a kindred spirit, but it's a worry' (G, LW3).

Recognising her need to find a 'kindred spirit' who thought like her, she was actively looking for the right person. The independence and autonomy of her space, untouched by others, was central for Gael and her sense of identity.

Professional Presence

One of the reasons I initially approached Gael was that she had a strong online presence that exuded confidence and professionalism and specified that she was an Early Years Teacher who had achieved EYPS. I was curious to know how this confident approach had developed.

‘I got the Quality Mark. I thought I’d do something that would quantify everything I’d been doing – I think I’d been doing it for four or five years then – so that I would have something to show prospective employees really – employers, rather – what I’d been doing and working through that and like bringing together the things that I was doing with the children’ (G, LW1).

This process of external validation of existing practice was similar to EYPS and Gael recognises this when she mentions quantifying what she was already doing. ‘I had mentors coming in and then verifiers come in and checking the different modules that I’d done and so... I think that was the start of making me the professional that I am’ (G, LW1). Gael needed this external confirmation to not just see herself as a professional but to project her image as one. It proved the ‘start of me advertising myself and projecting myself as a professional’ (G, LW1).

Part of this difference was also promoting herself ‘as somebody who was committed to the continuous professional development’ (G, LW1). This definition of a professional as someone who is committed to CPD was clearly an essential part of Gael’s thinking, but not something easy to achieve when self-employed and running a business. She had to fund herself at the outset, although later she was able to access local authority funding. She chose distance learning in order not to let the parents down by having to close the setting. ‘For me the families and the children they’re first, you know my commitment to them and being reliable, that’s very important to me’ (G, LW1).

Achieving EYPS had given her the confidence to take on her role as Vice-Chair of a national early years organisation:

‘I don’t think I’d have had the confidence to go and do that if I hadn’t done the professional status, because I do look on myself as a professional in everything I do and the way I present myself, the paperwork that I do’ (G, LW1).

It is interesting that she used the term paperwork here; clearly presenting herself in a business-like way was an essential part of her thinking. After all, she employed herself in her own business. This included an online presence, which she described almost diffidently:

‘a prospective parent said ‘oh yeah I googled you and up popped all this stuff’ and I thought wow [laughs]. Yeah and I don’t think that I’ve done it deliberately. It’s just how it’s progressed’ (G, LW1).

She described herself as moving away from what she had expected through her work in an early years organisation: ‘It has steered off in another way and it’s a natural way, a natural progression. That’s how my career’s gone really (G, LW2). Gael’s use of the word ‘natural’ here, also used throughout her discussions about her pedagogy, indicates a sense of following destiny.

By the time of our third LW, Gael had become Chair, convinced she had been chosen because of her professional approach to child-minding and her advocacy for the sector: ‘I think as a professional childminder, demonstrating that... being able to exhibit myself really to other members, to show that it is possible to do it’ (G, LW2). Here her diffidence about the ‘natural’ and undeliberate way she had developed an online presence is belied by her use of ‘exhibit myself,’ as a clear indication of the importance of self-presentation to her sense of professional identity.

Gael was confident that she would manage the position well, filling in gaps in her skills and knowledge through training opportunities:

‘...something that I’m doing naturally anyway, so I do think that I am a leader and I like that position. I’m quite comfortable presenting to a room full of professionals and I do that... and the idea like you said earlier about being embedded as a professional, I think that’s come from fighting for recognition as being more than a babysitter’
(G, LW2).

Clearly she embraced the role of pedagogical leader outside her setting in spite of her limited opportunities to lead within. As Chair of a professional organisation she was able to play a key role in a wider community of practice. Her confidence in her new position as a practitioner/leader was grounded in her experience:

‘When I went and spoke to Nick Clegg, you know I mean I wasn’t at all nervous about speaking to him because I knew what it was like. He could say what he thought it was like but I knew’ (G, LW3).

Early Years Teacher

Gael identified herself as an Early Years Teacher online, noting she had achieved this through gaining EYPS. ‘I use Gael, Early Years Teacher, and that’s on my business cards and on websites and everywhere’ (G, LW3). New parents were ‘quite impressed with that’ (ibid). However, she did not introduce herself as an Early Years Teacher, although she thought she should and had updated her status on Facebook to Early Years Teacher. Perhaps it was easier to do that online rather than in person.

‘I still feel – I don’t find it natural to describe myself as an Early Years Teacher. I have noticed though that when I do, people will say, “‘Oh, are you a teacher now then?’” As if it’s a new thing’ (G, LW2).

Ironically, when speaking at a National Policy Conference as Chair, she had been told by one of the other Speakers that she couldn’t put Early Years Teacher on her badge because ‘if you haven’t done the extra course as well then you cannot call yourself an Early Years Teacher’ (G, LW3). Even though Gael thought she knew there was no extra course, she felt insecure about arguing.

She could not quite connect with the title of Early Years Teacher because, just like Maddie, she feared the loss of the term ‘professional’:

‘I’ve spent so long trying to show to people and represent myself as being a professional – not only for myself, but for the profession – that it [EYPS] sits quite comfortably.’ (G, LW3).

According to Gael, the word teacher ‘feels different’ (ibid) from the interpretation of the term ‘teacher’ within the pedagogical framework that she had constructed for her practice:

‘...doing the Early Years Professional status and the children that I work with – because they’re learning through play and all the experiences we have... it’s a

partnership almost, rather than me being teacher – I sort of look at teacher being the one leading the way all the time, but it's not with us because half of the time it's the children that are starting the things and then we're following and going with it' (G, LW3).

She constructed the role of the teacher as a director, leader and organiser, which was different from how she saw her role as a childminder in a partnership with the children. I wondered about Gael's existing relationships with teachers in school. As Chair she was driving work on transitions from early years to school and expressed concern about a government 'constantly pushing to schoolify' (G, LW3). She had experienced few link visits to schools because 'it's not a big enough group to catch. If they go into a nursery, there could be five or six children there, but you go into a childminder and there's only one' (G, LW2). However, her experiences of very limited contact with schools were not just around her setting, but echoed those of Becky and Kate. She spent a great deal of time writing reports of assessments to go to reception classes, 'I had a couple of occasions where I spent ages doing these reports, gave them to the school and I don't think they even looked at them to be honest' (G, LW2). She did have one successful relationship with a reception teacher she had met in a local authority project who saw her as:

'a professional equal... because we had this link and she came into here and she was really, really impressed that she was able to talk to the little girl here... then I went into the school as well and because I was also carrying on picking the little girl up after school, so we still had that connection... that's an example of where it really works, but it's so rare' (G, LW2).

Gael's explanation reveals that personal connections were essential to be seen as a professional equal with teachers. She was aware that she could now be employed as a reception class teacher herself, but seemed hesitant about the opportunity.

'I don't know that I would because it's a different environment, isn't it? Well, yes, I think I could do the job, yes, because obviously with anything that you do, you'd be more trained and I'm happy to do that' (G, LW2).

Her confidence about taking responsibility for her own development through training was evident here. But once again she emphasised her sense of ownership and professionalism in her existing role: 'I feel that as a Childminder, I own my own professional knowledge more' (ibid).

Throughout our LWs Gael rarely mentioned Ofsted. Feedback from parents and children motivated her.

'They tell me if it's good quality, these children and their parents, you know... I know that they have confidence in me as well. But if I was to go into a school, I'd want to be the head teacher, so... [laughs] So this is me, I'm head teacher in my own setting' (G, LW2).

Nina

Context

I first met Nina at a CPD event that focused on architecture for early years settings.

Nina is the co-owner/manager of a pack-away pre-school, which she has run for thirteen years, with one or more business partners. She followed a work-based route to achieve a Foundation Degree in Early Years, funded by her local authority, and then completed a BA with EYPS in 2012. She had also recently opened a satellite setting specifically for children in receipt of the two-year-old funding, but my visits were made to the original pack-away setting. During the year my research took place, Nina's role remained substantially the same and the pack-away setting was rated 'outstanding', following a visit by Ofsted.

The Business

Like Gael, Nina was owner manager of her setting but in a collaborative partnership.

'Well it was a partnership and we're still in partnership... We've never taken on any new partners to replace. So there was five of us altogether. We met on our Level 3 qualification and just decided that the places we were at weren't providing the early years education and care that we felt that we could provide that we wanted to' (N, LW1).

Here she gives a clear indication of her value base: her power, control and responsibility for quality through managing both staff and physical resources, which are clearly central to her identity. 'We were all in places that struggled... and we didn't want a pre-school that actually you had to struggle just to have paper and pencils' (N, LW1). However, setting up the pre-school had been a financial struggle.

'We wanted it to be not a money-making thing, something that we could put the money back in, but obviously we wanted us to take a wage, and I remember the celebrations of the first wage that we had which was £50 and we was like 'oh my goodness' and our first lot of funding was £2,200. We set the whole thing up borrowing money [£300] from a Christmas Club' (N, LW1).

The ongoing financial challenges of her role as an owner manager impacted on her ability to manage the planning, pay and reward system for staff:

‘Business is good, we're full here, and we're full in [the satellite setting], but we had a massive tax bill, which was a real shock, to be quite honest. We struggle, we do struggle to be able to make that balance between paying the staff a wage that we know we will be able to afford’ (N, LW3).

Repetition of the word ‘struggle’ here emphasised the difficulties Nina experienced in running a business constrained by a funding model where enrolment varied and a charging policy was constrained by government funding for two and three-year-olds. Staff were on £6.50 an hour and Nina found it difficult to recruit practitioners because of this hourly rate. ‘The living wage, no, no, it's the minimum wage’ (N, LW1). She could not engage in anything other than short term budget planning: ‘We could afford this year to pay the staff a lot more money per hour, but we don't know if we'll be able to do that in September’ (N, LW3).

She had reluctantly raised the price of a morning or afternoon session to £12 per hour:

‘...because actually, I know it sounds daft, if we keep on charging a low enough rate, the government are going to actually think, well if you can afford to charge parents £12, you know, £10, well, you know, actually, why do you think that you should be paid this amount?’ (N, LW3).

Nina and her partner took small salaries from the business, but she recognised that to generate enough income to pay herself a salary commensurate with a teacher, for example, she would have to ‘go full-time, nursery, sort of 49 weeks a year, baby room, those sort of things. I really don't think you can generate that type of money here’ (N, LW1). As she explains her thinking further in the extract below, she struggles with the challenges of this situation.

‘I'm an owner manager. I think when you run your own pre-school... the children come first, do you know what I mean? We know it's hard work and we know that it's not enough, and we could go out and we could leave this place and go

somewhere else like a maintained school or something like that and get a far bigger wage, but actually this is mine' (N, LW1).

Just as in the case of Gael, here is a clear statement of identity which demonstrates Nina's sense of ownership about her own business, irrespective of her business partnership: 'I made this and actually that's worth everything itself' (N, LW1).

Places and Spaces

My first visit to the setting surprised me because it was housed in a sports and social club complex where I regularly played hockey on Saturdays. The main room of the setting was the area in which post-match teas, drinks and refreshments were served and I had never imagined an alternative use or what it might look like at other times. Nothing could have emphasised the challenges of operating a pack-away setting and the importance of spaces and places more powerfully than my initial impression on that first visit:

'I cannot believe this is where we tramp through in our hockey gear and sit around having teas. It looks so well organised and somehow permanent, yet here are all the displays, decorations, equipment which I have never seen or envisaged before, like some alternative reality' (Field Notes, 15.01 2014).

This realisation made me appreciate the logistical challenges which Nina faced operating a setting where everything had to be put away in cupboards and taken out again every week which she described it as focus on 'in and out' (N, LW1).

'We've got a good relationship with the club owners and they will allow us to put things to one side you know if nobody else is using the hall...but. sometimes you accumulate and then on a Friday [laughs] It's very hard to get it all into the cupboard' (N, LW1).

Although life was easier now she could afford to pay a caretaker to put things out and away again daily, Nina felt this 'in and out' process interfered with the process of helping children develop a sense of place for things, but it was 'very much the children's home as much as it possibly can be and they have the freedom to move

around it as they want to' (N, LW1), This exercised choice was important pedagogically.

'One of the main things we've been doing since we came back in September is to really look at the children that we've got and whether that room is really meeting the children's needs. Whereas before I think we would just actually carry on setting the room up every day as it was and just scratching our heads as to why isn't it working' (N, LW1).

Here Nina showed how the fluidity engendered by the need to form and reform the environment on a daily or weekly basis was actually a beneficial process in facilitating a constantly reflective process, allowing the environment to be moulded and changed in response to children's wishes.

This was evident as she showed me the construction area, which was a 'new layout' because of the need for 'more space' (N, LW1). Nina saw the process of re-imagining and re-creating the space every week or every day as an opportunity to be creative and responsive.

'You are forced to be creative... we've been to purpose-built places and some of them have been totally uninspired because there is a tendency to sit back and not have to think about it, you just let it be... You can't just pop things up, you have to think' (N, LW1).

The impact of this re-imagining also had a broader professional impact because it: 'creates the opportunity for more conversation, professional conversation between the team' (N, LW3). She identified the process of collaborative dialogue about the use of space as an essential part of a dialogic pedagogy. It was something she was working hard on at the satellite nursery, which had a fixed resource base where 'they could set the whole room up and not speak to each other' (N, LW3).

This sense of re-creating and re-imagining as a collaborative process in her one-room setting was challenged while Nina was working towards EYPS at a baby room placement in a larger nursery:

‘So I've got one room, everybody that's in that one room is part of... everything that happens, so going into the baby room, into a nursery where they had three or four different rooms, and three or four - I think it was more than that – different teams, I found it a little bit difficult to start with’ (N, LW3).

In the following extract she illustrates how she found the multiple and seemingly fragmented approach of the room system difficult and the complexity of the lines of management challenging to follow.

‘I started to say, you know, “Have you thought about this and have you thought about that?” But what I misunderstood was the fact that when you have that conversation, that conversation would need to go somewhere else and then it would need to go somewhere else until it got up to where it needed to be. Actually it all went a bit pear-shaped’ (N, LW2).

Dealing with these lines of decision-making and responsibility served to strengthen a reflective process that she then brought back to her own setting: ‘I was then able to draw on that and bring that back here which you know was lovely as the team here are so receptive’ (N, LW3).

This emphasis on a group or shared approach to meeting the needs of the children is reflected in the garden area that had been developed in a narrow gap between the building and a fence, full of little secluded play and activity areas.

‘Even though it's so much better than whatever we had four, five, six years ago, we're still constantly looking at, “well, we've got this right, so now, is it still meeting the needs of the children? If it's not, what can we do?”’ (N, LW3).

EYPS and Multi-Professional, Reflective Practice

Embedded within Nina’s pedagogical practice was a focus on the whole child and an inclusive approach to parents, combining the importance of developing both children’s independence and parental confidence. For example, she had set up a kitchen and engaged a chef to ensure children helped to prepare food and also discouraged the sort of ‘pappy’ food, which she felt hindered the development of the mouth muscles required for speech. She also supported the parents with positive strategies to help them

with toilet training. Nina saw the setting staff as role-modelling positive and facilitative relationships between adults and children, 'so we're trying to create those relationships and those moments of communication between parent and child that perhaps hasn't been there' (N, LW2); making a difference. She saw the influence of her setting as extending out into the world of children and families:

'I mean we keep trying to explain to the ladies down there [at the satellite setting] 9%, that's all we give the children really – it's only 9% of their week they're with us. It is the communication, it is the language, it's the listening and the respect that perhaps children are not experiencing at home' (N, LW2).

This could appear patronising, but seemed more reflective of her in-depth knowledge of the local area in which she had worked for so long. She talked confidently about her responsibility for liaising with other professionals throughout the LWs and recognised that she had been asked by the local authority to set up a satellite setting for the 'free for two' children because of her expertise in choosing and implementing pedagogical strategies which were effective within her sphere of influence. According to Nina:

'These children that are two and coming from areas of deprivation aren't two, they're not functioning at two, they're functioning at 0-11 months some of them or 18-20 months if you are lucky' (N, LW2).

Nina had initially been confident that the setting could meet these additional needs 'and within a couple of months these children would be back where they needed to be... No! No!' (N, LW2). She now recognised that it was not as easy as she first thought and needed sustained engagement with families and other professionals. However, she felt that her ability to reach out to these families through individually designed, focused interventions and to encourage them to develop independence in their children had been successful. 'When they started 90% of the children were functioning below age appropriate in PSED and now we've got 9%. Amazing!' (N, LW2). Like all the other participants she remained concerned about government policy which encouraged schools to take in two-year-olds. 'If they're in a school environment it will still be a school environment. It doesn't matter how many things they hang from the ceiling, they can't help it' (N, LW2).

EYPS played a key role in developing her own professional confidence, ‘huge confidence – to carry out what I think’ (N, LW1), even though originally she didn’t feel she needed anything more than her years of experience: ‘when they kept trying to get us to sign up to do the degree I was a great one of, “Oh I’ve doing this for over twenty-five years now. If I’m really honest, what more can I learn?” [laughs]’ (N, LW1). Despite her original misgivings, the process of taking her foundation degree and BA top-up with EYPS was a crucial part of her identity as a practitioner. The most important element of this was undoubtedly the embedding of reflective practice, which enabled her to interrogate theory and challenge things they had always done:

‘So all of a sudden we started to question things, which I think comes with looking into theory. I mean I don’t think I’ve ever questioned anything quite like I do now. Everything we do I say, “What’s that for, why are we doing it, what do you think the children are getting out of it?” (laughs) instead of, ““We don’t care, just do it”” (N, LW1).

Independent research projects conducted as part of her degree were crucial in facilitating this reflective practice and also in changing practice in her setting; she was particularly proud of the way she had used an investigation into mathematical thinking in the setting to improve practice and to ensure that staff saw everyday activities, such as filling and emptying a toy dustbin cart, as mathematical learning opportunities. ‘Before, they didn’t get any of that as maths’ (N, LW2). Nina described the Ofsted Inspector as being ‘blown away’ by her ability to work on this as a team (N, LW2).

Pedagogical Leadership

Nina’s pedagogical understanding of the value of learning through play was not just restricted to the children in the setting but applied to staff too:

‘I really believe that play and exploring is almost the starting for most things that people do, not just children, but anything. If we are faced with something new, I think it is the natural characteristic to play and to explore it, and then I think, once you feel confident with it, then you begin to really learn about it. So that is your active learning’ (N, LW3).

She explains this further:

‘Once you've really got to grips with it, then you start to play around with it, don't you? You start to be a bit more creative, and you start to experiment a little bit more, and you tend to change things, and, “What can I do if I put this in? What happens if I do that?” I think that just goes through life, continuously’ (N, LW3).

Here she applies a theory of active learning to the way pedagogical practice is developed in her setting. Nina’s articulation of her approach to pedagogical leadership was both challenged and constructed during her EYPS placement in a nursery:

‘I sort of struggled going in. I didn't want to go... I knew I had to go in there as a leader, because that was my role with regards to my EYP, but obviously, I hadn't done baby. So it was quite difficult to find that happy medium between, I'm learning, but actually I need to give you direction as well’ (N, LW3).

She highlights this tension in the dichotomy of learning and leading at the same time in her exploration of the challenges she faced when trying to change practice: ‘We had a bit of a sticky situation to start with. I felt that I could learn from them, whereas the ladies in the baby room seemed to be trying to prove a point... They saw it very much as a criticism of what they were’ (N, LW3).

According to Nina, this challenge served to deepen her understanding of leadership: ‘What it did is, it made me go away and think, ‘Well, am I criticising them? Can I actually deliver that in a different way?’ And it made me think about, you know... all people are different, aren't they? So, I can't say, “This is the way I deliver things, and this is how I want things,” and actually expect everybody to take it on the same way’ (N, LW?).

Here Nina explores her changed understanding of the way different people need to be led and ‘the difference between just sort of managing something and then being a leader’ (N, LW3).

‘I think, as a leader, you have to sort of just step back and think, right, actually, that person needs it slightly different... and I'll get really good results if I do it a little bit more round the houses with that person. But actually, that person over there needs it

to be direct, and it's dah, dah, dah, dah, and it's done, and they're sorted. I think that is a leader, isn't it? (N, LW3).

Her use of words like 'direct', 'dah dah dah', 'done' and 'sorted' reflect a no-nonsense and directive approach. But during the Learning Walks a different, more nuanced perspective seemed evident. Between my first and second visit, Nina's setting had been awarded outstanding by Ofsted: 'I was so proud of everybody and proud of myself but really proud of the team because I just thought, "Oh you know, we have really come together"' (N, LW2). Nina's response to this reflects a more affiliative approach to pedagogical leadership. It was 'absolutely brilliant, so the team are on a high, a real high' (N, LW2); 'It lifted everybody' (N, LW3). As this was under the new Ofsted requirements, Nina thought it even more valuable than their previous 'outstanding' when the feeling was, 'Oh this could be better and that could be better' (N, LW2). 'This time, we were like, yes, we know. Or we feel that we've really got it right and really comfortable with everything that we're doing' (N, LW2).

This collaborative and team-based perspective appeared in Nina's discussion about how and why she set up the pre-school. In her previous job everyone had clearly defined roles which limited responsibility. 'We wanted something different with regards to the team so that we we're all equal and everybody was responsible for everything' (N, LW1). Nina's hands-on approach was also evident: 'I was the first person in and my job was to make sure the toilets were cleaned every day' (N, LW1). She articulated why she wanted a different approach in her own pre-school:

'We wanted something that wasn't just for the children but was for the staff and for the team, and we sort of felt that if we were together in a unit it almost, you know, creates a sort of family... rather than you know here's the manager, here's the supervisor and here's the toilet cleaner' (N, LW1).

Nina's use of the word 'family' was used in an affiliative way to describe the way she saw the setting, but there were clear tensions in the way she also constructed her own role as 'family' leader, working through the staff for the benefit of the children. The equality of the team might not be as transparent as it seems and clearly Nina provided a driving force:

‘Yes, it is a leadership role and actually that puts a little bit more pressure on you in the sense that you’ve got to get your knowledge, your approach over to another member of staff to reach the children’ (N, LW3).

During our LWs, we stopped frequently to engage in practice discussions with staff and this seemed to reflect a shift of power, which Nina attributed to the development of her own confidence as a leader. For example, she had employed someone to develop a cooking and eating area and on each LW our discussions with that member of staff about nutrition, independence and enjoyment evidenced autonomy in this area. Nina explained:

‘Obviously being in there today, whereas that would probably in the past would have been something [my partner] and I would go, “Oh the craft area’s not really working, is it?” and not really include the girls, and then they would come back in and we would have changed it all around. So I think our team ethos is better, but I think that comes with confidence. I’m confident to lead the team’ (N, LW1).

Nina’s description of the way she had constructed a collaborative approach to practice in her setting began on the courses she had taken when she had the opportunity for: ‘sitting down and being able, not only to reflect on the work we are doing ourselves, but talking time, I think that is just invaluable’ (N, LW3). It was something she encouraged with her staff and during the LWs there were many occasions when she referred to these co-constructed dialogic discussions about practice. I wondered about other opportunities for CPD. Following their achievement of the first Ofsted outstanding in their local authority area using the new inspection framework, they had been asked to contribute to raising quality locally, ‘because [the lead of the LA quality team] said it was nice because it meant it was achievable’ (N, LW3).

‘Bless ’em, with all due respect, you know, they’re constantly pushing for, can you give us some sort of direction to another group with this and can you help us with that?’ (N, LW3).

Nina was gratified by this and her use of the phrase, ‘bless ’em, with all due respect’, signifies an almost ironic take on the shift in her relationship with the powerful force of the local authority. Nina was proud of the fact that she had become a moderator for the

local authority, but she recognised herself that the outstanding judgement had put pressure on both her and the setting: ‘You... you almost put a little bit of pressure on yourselves where you think, we’re outstanding, we should know what to do’ (N, LW3).

EYPS versus QTS and Early Years Teacher Status

Nina reported she had ‘very little’ relationship with teachers (with QTS) in school, with the exception of one local teacher who she felt shared the same ‘ethos with regards interest in transition’ (N, LW1). Transition was a particular interest for Nina. She worked hard to ensure that accurate transition information was sent to schools, particularly in the case of children with additional needs, and that children were well-prepared for school, but suspected that most of the information she sent was never read: ‘I know the ones who have read it because actually you would expect a phone call back and that is an indication that they’ve read it’ (N, LW1). However, Nina didn’t think this was representative of any major problem between teachers and early years staff, although she was hesitant in considering herself an equal in discussions with them: ‘I don’t think it is equal... it didn’t feel right to say you’re on an equal keel because I don’t think it is yet’ (N, LW1). She thought pre-schools were bound to have a different perspective to schools.

It was clear that although Nina was an Early Years Teacher in name, she was unable to pay herself the kind of salary a teacher would expect. I wondered if there were other benefits to being called an Early Years Teacher. Nina found the change of name in 2012 to be relatively unproblematic, as unlike the other participants she had only been an EYP for a short time and Nina’s local authority had been very quick to ensure that all EYPs renamed themselves as Early Years Teachers.

‘So you are an Early Years Teacher – so now, so when people say to me, “What do you do for a job?” I go, “I’m an Early Years Teacher”, and it’s so lovely to be able to say it whereas before they’d go, “What do you do?” and I’d go, “Oh I just run a pre-school”. I didn’t even say I owned it [laughs]’ (N, LW1).

I asked her how this felt. ‘Excellent. And I was thinking about this today. I think it’s not so much in here as out there’ (N, LW 1). Once again she used the expression ‘in and out’, but this time to describe how she was perceived inside the setting and out in broader society:

N: 'And I was saying to my husband, you know, you walk in somewhere and feel really quite proud even with friends and family, you know not just with professionals, but out there filling in a form, going to the bank, going anywhere where they ask what your profession is, so it's almost given to say to people (hesitation)

R: The word itself, isn't it?

N: Yes, teacher, it is, yeah, yeah it is.

(N, LW1)

Here Nina's hesitation is significant as she expresses how she sees her identity changed and enhanced 'outside' where the word 'teacher' has a recognisable status.

On my final visit, Nina was more confident.

'Now I say, "I'm an early years teacher," and some people will say, "Oh, right," and others will go, "Oh, so is that the same as a teacher in a school?" And, I say, "Well, it is the same, it's working with children that aren't of school age....so that's quite nice' (N, LW3).

But she also worried that this role as an Early Years Teacher might, ironically, take her away from the children:

'I don't seem to be involved with the children as much as I'd like to be. I'm involved with the staff, ensuring that the staff are carrying out and implementing, you know, but actually, I think that was something that I was really concerned that I would lose, and it does actually... And I spoke to the EYP who was at the baby room, and she said exactly the same' (N, LW3).

As owner/manager of her own setting, even in partnership, Nina had a strong sense of identity, moulded and formed through her own agency. She embraced the new role of Early Years Teacher with the intention of retaining the pedagogical leadership role embedded within EYPS. I have since heard that she has sold her setting for regulatory and financial reasons.

Chapter 6: Discussion and Composite Interpretation

Introduction

The five participants worked in very different settings, reflecting the original construction of EYPS as a status for a multiplicity of workplaces: a graduate with the skills of an early years practitioner, providing pedagogical leadership of EYFS within a broader remit of expertise in a multi-disciplinary environment (Jarvis et al., 2013). In this chapter, a composite interpretation and discussion (Van Manen, 1990) discerns, reveals and explores the essence of how participants ascribed meaning to their experiences in interacting with their distinctive environments (Biggerstaff and Thompson, 2008). It also endeavours to group together some of the common themes which are relevant to more than one participant and which could be termed invariant themes (Holroyd, 2001).

This discussion also includes a dialogue with literature, some of which has not necessarily been referenced earlier (Smith et al., 2009). Unlike content analysis, it is not usual to put these discussions into pre-identified themes but to try to look at them afresh (McNamara, 2005). I have tried to select and focus on the elements of participants' lived experience which illuminate an understanding of how they see themselves within their world of work and how they experience a sense of professional identity. These are grouped together in three sections, related to my original research questions, although it is recognised that several of these themes correlate with more than one question.

Workplace context, relationships, status, and power and in the construction of professional identity.

Spaces and Places – Contexts for Identity

Teaching necessarily involves time and space (Kelchtermans, 2014), but a phenomenological research investigation designed to expose the lived or embodied experience of its participants will naturally reflect a sense of place and space since it is always contextual. The use of Learning Walks makes this particularly explicit. The way in which this sense of place and space revealed itself during the research was still surprising. It became very clear that participants' sense of professional identity was

inextricably bound up with how they experienced the very different spaces and places in which this identity was exercised (Simpson, 2010; Lumsden, 2012). According to Soja (1996, cited by Latham in Hubbard et al., 2014), space is never a neutral background, but is continually negotiated through cultural and social aspects, values and rules; individuals see, experience and interpret their physical environment within what Soja refers to as 'Third Space' (ibid.). Most research on relational space relates to how classrooms are used as social spaces, but more recently, spatial theory has been used in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECEC) to analyse and appreciate the dynamics of co-constructed space (Dalli, 2008; Ferguson and Kuby, 2015; Vuorisalo et al., 2015). Within shared spaces, common identity markers, such as signs and symbols, reflect and express identities, particularly in areas of contested space (Clark, 2016). Depictions of organisational structures are particularly effective in providing a representation of underlying beliefs, and this was evident in the picture at Becky's setting which always had the teacher with QTS at the top of a pyramid, thus positioning Becky below.

Nina and Gael exhibit a strong sense of ownership because they have ultimate possession of the place in which they work. As an owner-manager, even in partnership Nina refers to the setting as 'mine'. Furthermore, although running a pack-away, which brings its own logistical challenges, she re-imagines and re-creates that space continually; each time she does it she demonstrates her ownership and control. Gael refers to herself as 'Head Teacher in her own setting' (G, LW3). Her home is her workplace and her strong sense of identity is bound up with concepts of home and naturalness. However, even this becomes problematic when the distinction between home and work becomes blurred. Sometimes she finds this dual home/ professional role a cause of stress and has to prevent herself seeing things that remind her of work.

Becky and Kate both experience space as contested. Becky feels she is bounded and restricted from working beyond her pre-school room, unable to move out into the setting and influence or lead others, in the way that Mathers et al. (2011), Payler and Locke (2013) and Davis (2014) describe. She experiences the loss of the outdoor learning space in a new building project as a symptom of her lack of control of her environment. She is isolated from a community of practice through geographical separation. Kate encounters the changing policy described in chapter 2 very visibly through the 'glorious empty space' (K, LW1) of the day nursery now moved into the school and the unused outdoor spaces. Her space and indeed place in the Centre

contracts and refocuses until she loses it completely through redundancy, mirroring the loss of the multi-professional EYPS role (Lumsden, 2011). In Maddie's case, her initial struggles with identity as a new lecturer are described through returning to a lecture room where she had been a student, hardly able to believe that her identity has changed so dramatically. She sees her desk as a signifier of both her role and her new academic freedom.

Space as a delineator of power and influence

Relational space is a signifier of status and power (Lefebvre, 1974, cited in Kuhlmann, 2013). For Becky and Kate, a clear demarcation between the school and co-located Children's Centre/ nursery - a separation of school and early years setting - was made explicit through implied ownership of space and resource. The ability to share resources such as car parking spaces or projectors characterise this distance in spite of physical proximity. All participants reported difficulties with liaison with schools during transition processes, unless there was some existing personal contact. Becky's visible distress at this juxtaposition, seeing the school so close but yet so inaccessible, powerfully epitomised this. A pedagogical distance between settings and schools, both charged with implementing the Foundation Stage, was apparent in spite of the juxtaposition of buildings and spaces and reflected one of the reasons for the change of name from EYPS to Early Years Teacher, intended to provide more coherence and collaboration across EYFS (Nutbrown, 2012; DfE 2013b). Given the complexities of the power relationships involved in ownership of space, it remains to be seen whether re-titling alone will be enough to bridge this perceptual and physical gap between pre-school and school, or whether a sustained and intentional period of transition may be required.

Democratised relational space

The identified issues with contested space, which reflect struggles with power and agency are in stark contrast to a common feature among the participants: a deeply held belief in the agency of young children in designing and managing their environment, which forms a strong dimension in their pedagogical identity. Vuorisalo et al. (2015) contend that a relational space in a day care context is not fixed but 'continuously negotiated, re-constructed and re-organised' (p.68). In Nina's case, the fluidity engendered by being a pack-away enabled her and the staff to consult with children and

reflect on their environment as they continually created and recreated it. Becky's first action on taking up her job was to reorganise the room and outdoor area, taking into account children's perspectives and emphasising choice and independence. She refers to this as 'rejuvenating', but was unable to replicate this critical element of her pedagogical approach outside her areas of direct responsibility in her room and outdoor space. Gael used her home space, totally within her control, to maintain a feeling of belonging and homeliness for the children. Although Kate was struggling to maintain her influence during the time of the research, she had clearly had a powerful effect on the environment in the past. This process of forming and re-forming a learning environment in consultation with children was common to all participants and reflects the pedagogical approach of EYPS, which they saw as much broader than management of classroom practice in QTS or the reference to managing the environment in Early Years Teacher Standards (NCTL, 2013). It is more redolent of a democratised, co-constructed space (Langford, 2010) and the confident responsibility and ownership of this process was a strong feature in participants' sense of identity.

Working with Parents, Families with the Wider Community

EYPS (2006) was based partly on a participatory ideology (Oberheumer, 2005) which involves sustained and effective relationships with parents, professionals in other fields and a wider community. In contrast, Early Years Teacher Status is located in a teaching and learning based classroom model; standards are focused on expectations, progress, assessment and learning, with only one sub-standard relating to relationships with parents and one related to knowledge about multi-agency working (NCTL, 2014; Appendix 4). All participants showed themselves to be very comfortable working within the participative model. For example, Becky was confident liaising with Speech and Language Therapists or initiating a Common Assessment Framework (CAF), although relatively new to the sector. Maddie used her practice in the Children's Centre and interactions with multi-professional colleagues to support dialogic teaching and learning with her students and help them to understand the effect of different professional heritages on practice, although she did not necessarily see EYPS as a multi-agency role. Kate's work with health professionals and voluntary workers at the centre of her multi-professional approach was informed by an understanding of the sensitivities and practicalities of such work. She felt the loss of this role keenly, not only because of the effect on the children and families she supported, but also on the staff that she mentored and guided. Nina's ability to set up another pre-school in

collaboration with the local authority, to provide targeted support for children from areas of social disadvantage, required the expertise to work within a multi-professional field. Similarly, working confidently with other early years organisations was part of Gael's professional role. This confidence and competence in working with other professionals was a very explicit feature of all their life worlds and gives credence to Lumsden's (2011) construction of a new professional working confidently in the space between education, health and social care, rather than with bounded agency. Even when subject to restrictions within their settings, participants did not appear similarly restricted in their ability to operate successfully within a multi-agency system.

Working with parents was clearly central to all participants' practice. This is contrary to the findings of Ranns et al. (2011) that EYPs were least effective in relationship to parents, although this must be qualified by noting that in that study parents were largely unaware of the role of an EYP. Gael was the most engaged and confident about working with parents, as might be expected in her role as a child-minder. She constructed this role as an expertise in replicating or enhancing a model of home life. She articulated a profound responsibility to her parents and was proud of her ability to be a 'helping expert'. Simpson et al.'s (2015) discussion of neoliberal discourses about the politics of parenting is helpful in recognising the original model of EYPS as part of a universalist, social justice agenda, in contrast to the more targeted approach of the Coalition and Conservative governments' social mobility agenda. Kate, Becky and Nina shared a common approach to engaging with parents, which reflected a tension between this universalist agenda and a more targeted approach to remedy based on perceived deficiencies in parenting. Nina's familiarity with the parents in her area led her to believe that she knew how best to meet the needs of their children. She recognised that early intervention was key in breaking cycles of poverty and disadvantage. Even though some of the discourse that she used about inadequate parenting reveals a narrative that could be considered judgmental when viewed outside her context, there is no doubting her deep commitment. Kate struggled with the re-conceptualisation of her work with parents from a proactive preventative agenda to a 'knee-jerk... stigmatising' one (K, LW2). A strong part of her professional identity was bound up with being an 'on tap resource' for parents (ibid). Becky's perceived championing of parents isolated by geography and disadvantage is rooted within a paradigm of holistic early intervention for families.

In and Out – the Wider World

An understanding of the local area in which they worked was an extra contextual dimension for all the participants. Their life worlds were not bounded by the physical restrictions of buildings, but realised within a more complex context of families and local communities. This formed a very strong and consistent part of their identity as professionals.

Both Kate and Becky were deeply committed to the families in their communities; even as Kate's role became more data-driven, she acknowledged it would have a greater impact on quality and therefore impact on families in 'our community' (K, LW1). For Nina and Gael, confident in their ownership of their own space, moving 'in and out' of their setting and engaging in the wider community was always part of their discourse when talking about practice. Whereas Nina's in-depth knowledge of her local area informed her pedagogical approach, Gael's setting had a feeling of flowing out into the surrounding area from the safe, homely base. Maddie remained conscious of her influence beyond the confines of her Centre or University, aware that although her contact with children, families and students was a very limited part of their time, extended impact was important in a process of empowerment. This aligns very closely with Murray and McDowall Clark's (2013) model of leadership practised in the community and was a very explicit feature of all participants' practice, embedded within a sense of professional identity. It contrasts sharply with participants' perception of the more inward facing and classroom based role of a teacher.

EYPS/Early Years Teacher Status: identity and pedagogical choices.

The Reflective Practitioner

Critically reflective practice is an essential element in the pedagogical underpinning of EYPS (Jarvis et al., 2013; Reardon, 2013), and it is no surprise that all participants still saw this as essential in their professional identity as Early Years Teachers. Maddie was the most articulate about this when she said that EYPS had 'definitely instilled the importance of being a reflective practitioner' (M, LW3). Part of this ability to reflect is based on the application of theoretical knowledge, often gained through a degree element in the EYPS programme. Gael attributed her ability to give advice to parents to

her depth of understanding about child development, while Nina found the most useful aspect of reflection was her ability to reflect on the intersection of theory and practice and to challenge things that had always been done. EYPS had given her ‘huge confidence’ to embed reflective practice. Even if participants did not use the specific word ‘reflection’ on the LWs it is clear, particularly in the case of Kate, that they were deeply reflective about their practice. This reflection also encompassed an ability to reflect on personal, autobiographical experiences and practice (Layen, 2015). Although reflection plays an essential part in early years practice (for example, McDowall Clark and Baylis, 2012; Bleach, 2014), and is seen as a key element of a sense of professionalism (Chalke, 2013), it is certainly not a universal attribute and Maddie noted the difficulty some other staff in the children’s centre experienced with authentic reflection.

Reflective practice is a common element in many professions, such as health and teaching (Day et.al, 2006) and not limited to EYPS. However, the sense of freedom and autonomy to act on that reflection from a pedagogical perspective appeared to be a common characteristic in all participants, regardless of whether they were owner-managers or not. Nina describes constant cycles of reflection with her staff, facilitated by the need to re-create the environment every day. She refers to this as ‘talking time’. Maddie talks confidently not just about her practice in the Children’s Centre but also about matching her theoretical knowledge to her students’ experience through reflective sessions. Even when bounded by spaces and places, participants did not feel they were challenged on pedagogical choices within those areas in which they were free to exercise influence. Although Kate mentions having to withstand discussion and debate to influence change, she also describes vividly how her ideas had been ‘embraced’ by her colleagues in the children’s centre; similarly, Becky talks confidently about the pedagogical choices made in her room and the toddler outdoor area. All participants attribute this confidence and expertise in reflective practice to EYPS and such autonomy is an essential element in their sense of professional identity.

Ownership of pedagogical choice and expertise

The explicit demonstration of an assured and certain pedagogy among all participants, arising from their identity as a reflective practitioner and embedded within a confident intersection of theory and practice, mirrors the findings of Davis and Capes (2013), who studied the way EYPs in Essex met ECM outcomes. None of the participants in my

study showed any lack of confidence, knowledge or understanding about the best way to work with young children, nor did they refer to the standards at any time during my visits. This indicates, just as Murray and McDowall Clark (2013) found, that these norms of behaviour were fully embedded and did not seem to require external validation. They were particularly confident about their work with children from birth to three (Manning Morton, 2006) and deeply concerned about how provision for two-year-olds in school could be made appropriate. This pedagogical confidence and certainty encompassed some common themes involving, for example children's choice and independence, the key role of learning through play, the importance of outdoor play, cross-curricular approaches, and a holistic approach to child development. Kate's description of her pedagogical battles with the school nursery ended in disappointment that she had been unable to convince the teacher of the value of a play-based approach, but Kate did not question that approach herself, describing how she had acquired and sustained her appreciation of its effectiveness.

Pedagogical expertise is referred to obliquely by both Mathers et al. (2011) and Hadfield et al. (2012) when they demonstrate the impact that EYPs had in their settings. It contrasts sharply with some of the narratives from teachers who find the constraints of teaching and learning approaches in school to be restrictive. Kate was anxious about this loss of pedagogical freedom on her return to school. Far from the school 'embracing' her ideas, she found the clash of pedagogies and lack of freedom to exercise her pedagogical choices intolerable. An essential part of her professional identity as an Early Years Teacher was a sure sense that she knew the right way to help young children develop and learn, but she no longer had autonomy to act on this in her new role in school. This certainty, rooted in experience, is mirrored in Gael's reference to her discussion about child-minding practice with Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg when she said, 'I knew what it was like. He could say what he thought it was like but I knew.' (G, LW3). Although Gael understood that she could work in a school as an Early Years Teacher, she was concerned about the loss of this autonomy if she did so. Both Gael and Nina had their pedagogical practice 'validated' by an outstanding Ofsted judgment, although in Gael's case she did not think it significant enough to mention to me.

Pedagogical Leadership

The original intention behind EYPS was to provide pedagogical leadership of the EYFS in a predominantly private and voluntary sector. In spite of evidence of a measurable impact on outcomes (Mathers et al., 2011), this role is no longer explicitly visible in Early Years Teacher (Appendix 3), although there is an expectation that they should lead and supervise Early Years Educators (NCTL, 2014). It is no surprise that participants located in such diverse environments experienced this disappearing leadership role in very different ways. For Nina and Gael, owning their settings empowered them as leaders and they continued to see themselves as leaders of practice, exercising this power in diverse ways. Evidently, they were both driving forces within their settings, not just as managers or figureheads, but through the facilitative and collaborative approach to quality that Murray and McDowall Clark (2013) describe. Nina talked about the challenges she faced in attempting to provide pedagogical leadership because of the room system in a placement setting, using this experience to ensure a more open and collaborative approach in her own setting. She was deeply thoughtful and reflective when she talked about the ways she had explored, understood and used leadership strategies, which could be adapted individually to each person.

Becky's experience in a traditional nursery setting was very different, echoing the findings of Preston (2013), Davis (2014) and Payler and Locke (2013), who uncovered a clash of culture between the pedagogical leadership role, as constructed in EYPS, and the existing, deeply embedded, traditional forms of leadership and management in early years settings, which prevented the free exercise of this role. In spite of her internalised collaborative and distributed model of leadership, as a Senior Practitioner based in a pre-school room, Becky found these structural barriers insurmountable. Even as an Early Years Teacher, she found herself stranded, able only to watch in frustration as the setting employed a teacher with QTS to provide the expertise that she knew she already had but was unable to exercise.

Kate's pedagogical leadership within the children's centre was signified by a much gentler and collegial way of influencing and supporting, which she referred to as 'nudge' but was perhaps more redolent of a catalytic and participative approach (Murray and McDowall Clark, 2013). However, this affiliative approach to pedagogical leadership was grounded in more than EYPS alone since Kate also had QTS and extensive experience in school. She worked within the multidisciplinary children's

centre sector where sensitivities around professional heritages and boundaries (Hymans, 2008) made exercising such leadership a more complex process and a depth of understanding essential; but, according to Kate, although she drew upon her years of experience, it was EYPS that gave her the ‘validation and credence’ to ‘think like a leader’ (K, LW2)

Although Gael might seem to have had more limited opportunity for pedagogical leadership within her setting, it was clear that she saw both her work with parents and families and her national professional organisation work as extended pedagogical leadership. Rather differently, it is hardly surprising that Maddie experienced problems taking the identity of an EYP, when she was told not to say she had EYPS in case it upset other practitioners. She visualised a model of pedagogical leadership as her extended impact through her students, their settings and out into the community. She brought concepts, ideas and theories to the practical experience of her students and was exhilarated by the synergy created.

This model of pedagogical leadership acquired through EYPS was still powerfully expressed by all participants as part of their professional identity, even though it was contextualised and exercised in different ways and no longer explicit in their role as Early Years Teacher.

Values and Beliefs

Passionate care

Existing research with EYPs identified passionate care as a fundamental value at the core of their sense of professionalism (Lloyd and Hallet, 2010; Lumsden, 2012; Murray, 2013). It is significant that only one of the participants, Becky, used this term directly and said it in an emotional and challenging situation where she was justifying why she felt so constrained by the limitations placed on her as an Early Years Teacher. All participants were passionate as they talked about their jobs, but this is a common feature when people enjoy their work or feel it is valuable. It could be argued that it is neither specific to EYPs or Early Years Teachers. There were few references to maternalist discourses and even less to concepts of nurturing or caring. Significantly again, it was only Becky who explained explicitly that she ‘really cared for’ the children when talking about her frustrations. These discourses of mothering, caring, love and passion

were almost wholly replaced by narratives of knowledge, professionalism and confidence. However, one common value appeared in all the participant's life worlds: the concept of making a difference.

Making a difference

One would expect Maddie and Becky, graduates of a leadership programme similar to Teach First, to articulate the idea of making a difference; intervening early to improve the life chances of children and families, particularly in areas of social deprivation. For Maddie, this commitment to changing life-chances also extended to her students and using evidence-based practice was an essential part of an impact-driven and accountable system. Nina's satellite setting, opened specifically to meet the needs of the 'free for two' children in her area, forced her to rethink her assumptions about local families to make this effective in practice. Kate was committed to 'the future of education, I wanted to be looking at the whole family, the whole development of the child and I just knew that children's centres would make a difference to young children and families' (K, LW1). This commitment to parenting and family support continued after her redundancy with far less rewarding pay and conditions of work. Even Gael's pedagogical approach involved conscious strategies to help children experience a home life that they might not already have. In spite of the change of their role to Early Years Teacher, the concept of making a difference, initiated by the ECM agenda (DFES, 2003), remained deeply embedded within their belief and values system, clearly part of their professional identity. This goes some way to support the findings of Brock (2012), that practitioners did not drift away from their basic values, even in the face of relentless policy change. Of course, this is not mutually exclusive to the more recent emphasis on preparation for school (Allen, 2011). Becky clearly thought part of her role was to prepare already disadvantaged children for what she saw as the less forgiving school environment, and Gael felt that she was providing an enhanced environment for her children, which would benefit them on arrival in school.

Valuing the Early Years Workforce

It is significant and representative of a gendered workforce that few men appeared in their professional life-worlds. The men were largely invisible, although made visible

through discussion. Nina referred to the empowering activity of the caretaker who moved everything in and out every day. Although her CEO's office was actually located upstairs, Becky reflected the top-down managerialist and gendered discourses highlighted by Jonsdottir (2014) in Icelandic pre-schools (for children up to six) when she expressed her feelings of constraint and restriction and referred to the CEO as 'the man upstairs' or 'the powers that be upstairs' (B, LW1-3).

Embedded within the practice of all participants and connected to their own sense of value was the notion of a mutual valuing of a traditionally devalued and gendered early years workforce. Becky's attempts at providing a supportive and facilitative leadership role by encouraging other staff to improve and develop their practice, for example, were hampered by the low pay, which she thought undermined and devalued their work. All members of staff were on minimum wage. One member of staff who she had 'taken under her wing' was paid at an apprentice rate of £2.64 an hour for any extra hours she worked. Not surprisingly perhaps, she was leaving to work in a meatpacking factory. Becky herself found any offer of a pay rise linked to training but as a returnable levy if she chose to leave. Following redundancy, Kate found herself doing substantially the same role with parents but funded under a zero hours contract.

Nina and Gael experienced these financial dimensions from a different standpoint as owner managers. Nina talked of her constant struggles to make ends meet and provide a pay and reward system for the staff commensurate with their effort, skills and expertise, because of government funding constraints. The twin government intentions of raising quality through the development of staff while keeping funding levels fixed in the private and voluntary sector caused continuing and insoluble issues for her. It was impossible to plan ahead or to pay a living wage to her staff, or indeed to pay herself a rate commensurate with her new role as an Early Years Teacher, without either substantially expanding to a full time nursery, or further limiting staff pay and conditions (Lloyd and Penn, 2014; House of Lords, 2015)

Professional knowledge, skills, status and power; the definition and construction of professional identity in EYPS/ Early Years Teachers in relation to others.

Professional – a contested term

If an attribute of professionalism is a critically reflective voice (Simpson, 2010), then a clear sense of professionalism was part of the identity of all the participants. However, the concepts of professionalism and being a professional are subtly different. The role of EYPS embedded the term Professional within it, but professionalism is a much broader concept; one can take a professional approach to work without necessarily being seen as a professional (Ross, 2005; Evetts, 1999). For Gael and Nina, being professional in approach was deeply intertwined with their identities as business owners, and proved very difficult to separate from their identity as EYPs or Early Years Teachers. As Gael said, ‘I see myself as a professional in everything I do’ (G, LW1). Markers and signifiers of Gael’s professional approach to her business included her online presence and her committee roles in professional organisations; without reference to maternalist or caring discourses within this professional framing of her identity (Osgood, 2006a; Kendall et al., 2012), even though the concept of home and family was powerfully represented within it. EYPS was only part of this concept of professionalism, which she attributed, not only to the availability of opportunities such as the foundation degree or EYPS, but to initiatives like the Quality Mark. A strong internal drive to improve her practice and develop her career was intricately bound up with her own view of herself as a professional. In a similar way, Nina saw the opportunity to take a foundation degree and BA top-up degree as an essential part of a process of professionalisation, only enhanced by achieving EYPS or earning the name ‘professional’. In both these cases professionalism was not seen as imposed (Osgood 2006a), but an opportunity organically developed, grasped and achieved through sheer individual effort and hard work (Miller, 2008a, 2008b).

Furthermore, this word ‘Professional’ was a part of their identity that they wanted to hang on to. It is clear that, far from wanting to be teachers, the participants wanted recognition of their own professionalism (Fairchild, 2014). Both Gael and Maddie mourned the loss of this term in Early Years Teacher. For Gael it meant taking a professional approach at all times and presenting herself in a business-like way. With

parents, she was careful to separate her role as a professional childminder from that of social friend. For Maddie, who already had a business degree, the word professional gave external validation to her role through the acquisition of a body of knowledge (Hordern, 2013). Even though she was an Early Years Teacher, she said ‘I am an EYP and that’s how I’ve got that knowledge to talk about effective practice’ (M, LW2). EYPS provided validation of her professional knowledge. In contrast, Kate attributed her professional approach to the fact that she was a teacher. She saw EYPS not as a way of professionalising herself but in a similar way to Maddie and Becky, providing expertise and validation of her knowledge of birth to five. Far from seeing professionalism as imposed, or feeling silenced and passive (Osgood, 2006a), here it was viewed as part of an emancipatory and autonomous process.

Professional knowledge

One of the striking aspects of all participants was the confidence and autonomy they felt in both owning and inhabiting their professional knowledge, which is seen as an essential element in any profession. The original EYPS standards were developed in consultation with the sector. It can be argued that, although CWDC may have initially selected and created the parameters of this knowledge base in conjunction with the Early Education Advisory Group (EEAG) (Jarvis, 2013), the process of assessment and moderation in subsequent years conducted with the sector developed and established this professional knowledge as a regime of truth (Urban, 2008; Simpson, 2010). In my study, these Early Years Teachers were confident and exhibited a strong sense of ownership of their professional knowledge and expertise (Lumsden, 2012). Gael, for example, referred to this when she explained why she was so confident in interpreting the EYFS and claimed explicitly that as a childminder she owned her professional knowledge.

However, the introduction of the Early Years Teacher Standards in 2013 indicated clear government intention, not just to regain control of both the knowledge base and the way this should be interpreted, but to change the focus of the whole status, reflecting the warnings of Cartmel et al., (2013) that professions with stronger identities can marginalise the knowledge base of new professions. This challenged and destabilised this sense of ownership for all participants. The trepidation they felt about becoming a ‘teacher’ and the way it might affect this sense of ownership was clearly visible in their reflections.

Communities of Practice and Continuing Professional Development

The provision of CPD and the establishment of a community of practice are well – recognised in both creating and sustaining professional identity (Wenger, 1998). It is clear from the participants' life worlds that this was a patchwork and ultimately fractured process, interrupted by their wholesale shift to the identity of 'teacher'. Although they all identified strongly with the role of an EYP, sustaining and developing an identity was much more difficult; Lloyd and Hallet's (2010) findings of a lack of a clearly defined EYP professional group are supported in the way the participants were able or unable to access available CPD or feel part of a community of practice. Becky felt isolated and disempowered, not a 'real teacher' but also not part of any other professional network. Although she had very limited opportunities herself, she arranged courses for other members of staff. In contrast, Gael found her professional organisation gave her the development she needed, reinforcing her identity as a childminder rather than an EYP or Early Years Teacher. Nina was initially flattered by the Local Authority using her setting as a model to raise standards in other settings, but began to tire of the one-way process when she saw it from a business perspective. Kate found her community of practice shrinking and ultimately extinguished. Only Maddie, invigorated by her new role in a University, actively sustained a vibrant and supportive Community of Practice with students, colleagues and ex-colleagues.

What's in a name? Issues of power, identity and status: navigating the dual identity

It is well- accepted that professional identity is constantly formed and reformed in a process of interpretation and re-interpretation, depending on contextual experience (Beijard et al, 2004; Mutanen, 2010). The development of a composite identity or collage (Baxter, 2011) is an integration of these interpretive experiences from both a professional and personal perspective. In this study, it is clear that the twin processes of interpreting, forming and reforming were set within a landscape where differentiating oneself from other professional groups played a significant part (Maier-Höfer, 2015) and this clearly linked to the regulatory imposition of job roles and titles. These played a major role in perceptions of a professional identity.

Most of the research in this area has been conducted among people who have made voluntary changes in their careers, transitioning from one chosen role to another (Ibarra, 2005). Colley (2012) has considered Connexions staff becoming Personal Advisers, but the renaming and repositioning of their role does not place them in a completely different profession. In contrast, the re-naming of EYPs as Early Years Teachers was a compulsory and seismic shift from a very recently established professional identity and heritage directly into another far more well-established but also very different one of teacher. There was no formal process of transition or transformation, no extra course or training. They were suddenly teachers. The navigation of this dual identity during a period of intense policy change required a sustained effort to integrate new experience into existing notions of professional identity. The tensions explicit in the process highlight the differences between the self – perception of participants and the label of ‘teacher’.

This process of suddenly becoming an Early Years Teacher proved destabilising for all the participants of my study in different ways. There is no doubt that the word ‘teacher’ has greater weight and significance outside the sector, reflecting the significance of nomenclature (Lightfoot and Frost, 2015), perhaps justifying government intention to increase visibility and status in early years through the use of this term (Nutbrown 2012; DfE, 2013b). Other studies have shown that parents in particular had failed to engage with or fully understand the term Early Years Professional (Ranns et al., 2011; Davis, 2014), partly because of a lack of sustained government involvement in facilitating EYPS as a recognised profession in the workplace (Mitchell, 2015).

In this study, Maddie thought that settings had also failed to wholly understand the term too. Gael felt that parents were impressed by the word ‘teacher’. She immediately updated her profile online and had new business cards printed in line with her careful self-presentation. Nina reflected this feeling of increased status powerfully when she called it ‘excellent’ and ‘lovely’ that she could say, ‘I’m an Early Years Teacher rather than ‘oh I just run a pre-school,’ (N, LW2) when people asked her what she did. Her use of the example of putting her profession down on a form at the bank, for example, and being proud to put ‘teacher’ is both significant and ironic. In her view, the actual word ‘professional’ in EYPS did not signify a profession in the way ‘teacher’ does.

However, hesitations and uncertainties in fully owning the term teacher were also evident, although experienced differently by each participant. Their perceptions are interesting and contextualised. The term 'teacher' felt different pedagogically to Gael. In her mind a teacher was more of a leader, director and organiser, whereas she saw her own practice as child-centred: a partnership with children. Here she had almost inverted the concept of pedagogical leadership in EYPS. Gael talked about updating her status on Facebook to Early Years Teacher or responding to people who thought she had done something new. Even when speaking at a National Conference, she lacked the confidence to correct a fellow speaker who told her she had to do another course to call herself an Early Years Teacher. Ironically, she then confessed that she would not feel confident to fulfil that role outside her setting without further training. Here she reverted to what was familiar; her strong sense of self in owning and directing her professional development to construct and maintain her professionalism and identity.

Nina's initial pride at suddenly becoming a teacher was tempered by a worry about whether this would mean the inevitable loss of her pedagogical leadership role or take her away from the kind of direct contact with the children that she thought valuable. She still had to explain to people exactly what an Early Years Teacher was. Becky's concern focused on the expectations which others, particularly parents, might have of her as a teacher and her inability to authentically take on this newly given identity. Like Gael, she saw herself as an EYP first: 'I don't think I'll ever call myself an Early Years Teacher because that's not what I did'. When she said, 'I'm not a teacher, I don't have QTS, I'm not a proper teacher,' she was making a clear statement of professional identity. This disquiet was also voiced by Maddie, who was troubled by the visual image the word teacher created for some families. It was very telling when she said that the use of the term might alienate the 'real teachers' in the school, as they would have known that I wasn't a teacher'. This self-doubt is redolent of William's (2010) findings of insecurity in teachers, but unsurprising in view of Maddie's experience with EYPS. However, relatively immune in the HE Institution, Maddie could be more sanguine about this and continue to reassert her identity as an EYP, even though she recognised that parents might consider it a 'woolly' term. Kate's trepidations were different. She already had QTS and saw this renaming as returning her to the pedagogical paradigm of teaching which she had left behind.

The schoolification agenda

Tensions between Early Years Teacher Status and QTS have already been examined through issues of space and place, reflecting some of the questions of hierarchy, status and expertise appearing in participant's life worlds. The 'schoolification' agenda, a top-down emphasis on readiness for school, with concomitant provision for children from two to five in schools where they could be taught by teachers (DfE, 2013; Brogard Clausen, 2015), accompanied and enveloped the introduction of Early Years Teacher Status. Most Early Years Teachers are now employed in the maintained sector (House of Lords, 2015; Fitzgerald and Kay, 2016). Maddie highlighted the dichotomy: work in schools and earn more but without the necessary experience or desire to work with this age group, or work in early years and earn much less. She thought it undermined efforts by the early years sector to 'professionalise itself'.

One of the intentions in renaming EYPs as Early Years Teachers was to provide greater coherence across early years settings and schools (Nutbrown, 2012), but little evidence in this research supports such coherence at this early stage. The research participants all reflected on this tension. Becky struggled to engage teachers in collaborative working about transition. Their suggestion that they would deal with children 'in September' disempowered her and devalued her expertise. The repeated rejection of her applications for teaching jobs in Academies was a powerful confirmation of her lack of status and value. Meanwhile she watched a teacher with QTS take on her own pedagogical leadership role in the nursery, seen as preferable for Ofsted requirements.

However, Maddie saw the split between schools and settings as a distinction rather than a divide. She worked successfully with teachers in the co-located school, but highlighted how behaviour, dialogue and linguistics could consolidate or undermine status when she explained how a new manager in the Children's Centre gave greater weight to suggestions from teachers. Although Nina was more sanguine about the lack of relationship between schools and settings, seeing this as an indication of the different perspectives of both, it is noteworthy that she was hesitant in considering herself an equal in discussions with teachers. Kate, who already had QTS, benefitted from her existing confidence as a teacher with QTS. However, unlike the teachers in Roberts-Holmes (2013) study, she did not consider achieving EYPS to be 'jumping through hoops', but an essential part in her professional knowledge, which allowed her to become expert across the range from birth to eleven. She was deeply concerned,

however, about the way children's centres were being 'dragged' and 'coerced' towards the school sector, reflecting Ortlipp's (2011) caution against using an education discourse in order to raise the status of early years workers, when it inevitably results in the loss of a multi-professional, caring dimension or the inescapable loss of a knowledge base to a profession with a stronger identity (Cartmel et al., 2013).

The third thing

Although all participants talked eloquently about their experience of identity, Kate's reflections were the most complex and multi-layered, as she had both QTS and EYPS and was now, confusingly, also an Early Years Teacher. She struggled with the conceptualisation of this shift to what she saw as 'the third thing', constructed of all the positive elements of her experience as a QT, EYP and CCQT. The way she called herself 'morphed' encapsulates both her own role in this process of change, but also the part played by changing policy outside her control (K, LW1). For Kate this appeared a wholly beneficial process; she described herself as 'two for the price of one' (K, LW2) as she explained how her experience would only enhance her role as a teacher.

However, as it turned out, she was also rightly concerned about how others would see and experience her as this 'morphed individual', particularly within the schoolification paradigm of the early years. Her core beliefs and values, taken from EYPS, made her concerned about how schools could possibly meet the needs of two-year-olds. She recognised that although she had acquired new skills and experience, such as the ability to raise a CAF or work closely with parents, these were not skills privileged within a school environment. Furthermore, her freely constructed experiential, pedagogical leadership role was actively discouraged in the school environment where pedagogical conformism was both valued and indeed mandatory. As a 'morphed' individual, she was permanently changed and could not go back to her previous identity as a teacher; but her new identity as an Early Years Teacher did not quite fit.

Concluding Thoughts

It is well-recognised that the way people make sense and meaning of their experiences is constrained by social contexts and cultural discourses (Lyons and Coyle, 2016).

Although participants in this research worked in very different contexts and had followed different pathways to EYPS, they all shared the common experience of transiting from one profession to another, navigating this re-conceptualisation of the

dual identity during a period of intense policy change within the sector. In this chapter, I have argued that the research participants have individually experienced and made meaning of this process depending on their workplace context, individual deeply held beliefs and life experiences. This has not always been a comfortable process for them. However, I have also identified common themes and dimensions which appear to spring from their original professional identity as an EYP, carried with them into their new identity as an Early Years Teacher and which inform their current experience of professional identity. In the next chapter, I draw some conclusions relating to their experience of professional identity before reflecting on some of the methodological issues that both challenged and energised my research. Finally, I underline the significance and original contribution of this study.

Chapter 7: Conclusions

Introduction

This research study has investigated how the acquisition of EYPS, then Early Years Teacher Status, contributed to and defined a sense of professional identity in my research participants. I began this research fully immersed in the strategic and operational dimensions of both programmes, as EYPs were re-named as Early Years Teachers. What I wanted to hear, as a counterbalance to the language of policy, was the voice of participants, not as some amorphous mass or data set, but as individuals with personal perspectives and complex stories to tell about the way they made meaning of this enforced change of identity. In the previous chapter, I set out some of the ways in which I think EYPs/Early Years Teachers expressed meanings of professional identity: organised, systematic evaluation of themselves and their roles within the context of their individual work environment (Erikson, 1968; Izadania, 1979). In the following section I discuss the conclusions and implications of the study and highlight its significance and original contribution to knowledge. I have already highlighted some of the methodological issues that I have grappled with throughout this study. Only now do I have a genuine appreciation that you can only really understand phenomenology by doing it (Van Manen, 1990). I examine some of the challenges I faced, how I wrestled with these issues and how I approached the twin concerns of rigour and validity, using Yardley's broad principles (2000, cited in Smith et al., 2009). I also reflect on the appropriateness of IPA as an approach in understanding how participants made meaning of their professional identity.

Although the findings from such a small-scale piece of phenomenological research, presented through the voices of participants, cannot be generalised, this study is still an important interpretation of what constitutes professional identity in EYPs/Early Years Teachers. In spite of the challenges in disentangling the complicated webs and knots of experience constructing their sense of themselves (Van Manen, 1990), individualistic dimensions to this sense of identity are clearly visible, with other, more common experiences threaded through their worlds, which can be recognised as 'invariant themes' (Holroyd, 2001). Although this study has not set out to construct a specific model of professional identity, it still contributes to conceptual understanding of the notion of professional identity.

Individual Agency

My findings suggest that the issue of professional identity remains an important dimension in the lives of my participants and they were actively engaged in the construction of their identity as Niemi (1997) suggests. Personal factors continue to play a major role in the construction of professional identity and this study reveals both the richness and complexity of individual experience and expertise that my participants brought to their professional roles, captured through the medium of IPA. It shows that while each participant experienced their identity differently, there were common features for all. What was also apparent was the existence of a stability within their own belief and values systems that enabled them to respond with flexibility to the landscape changing around them. This left me with an undeniable feeling that these Early Years Teachers are a wonderful addition to the workforce; confident and expert pedagogical leaders, resilient and value-driven, with an expertise in working with families and assured in the value of multi-professional working. Although anxiety and uncertainty about the changing circumstances is clearly evident, this is matched by strong personal identity and agency, which will enable them to take responsibility for their career development and take control of their opportunities in the future.

Context – professionalism, policy and the deliberate construction of identity

My findings reinforce the importance of context in a dynamic process of identity formation. Context is more than just physical space or working environment, although both provide a stage on which to experience, enact and integrate notions of identity, as has been seen in the previous chapter. Context also encompasses the changing policy and social environment. In this thesis, I argue that beyond the core values and belief systems, constructed through time by personal and interactive factors, identity construction is more malleable and interactive dependent upon specific contextual factors. My findings demonstrate how specific regulatory initiatives have framed, moulded and formed participants' professional identity, attributing meaning and characteristics through the creation and imposition of the two job roles and titles; EYPS followed by Early Years Teacher. Consequently, the changing context of early years

and wider government policy and a postmodern initiative to use standards to define shared understanding in public sector roles (Bryan, 2012) has played a major role in my participants' sense of professional identity. In this case, professional identity cannot be seen in isolation as a personal attribute but must be viewed as something deliberately formed and shaped. However, in highlighting the significance of regulatory initiatives intended to construct or exchange identities, my findings reflect the continued complexity and trajectory of professionalism in the early years. They show how constant change and inconsistency affect a developing sense of professional identity, causing participants to hold tightly on to their individual belief and values systems as the landscape around them changes.

Attempts to dismantle professionalisation in a marketisation of education, a shift of emphasis from social justice to social mobility, and financial constraints owing to austerity economics affected the formation, development and expression of identity in the original role of EYPS, the renamed and repositioned Early Years Teacher and the changing landscape within which this role now exists. The accompanying move towards schoolification orientated the role of Early Years Teacher sharply towards an educational model. If it can be argued that elements of professional identity convey the identity of a profession itself (Niemi, 1997; Beijard et al., 2004), then these conflicting positions and discourses have muddied the waters around the role and identity of Early Years Teacher.

It is clear from the data that in spite of being re-named as Early Years Teachers, participants still saw themselves very much as EYPs. They owned EYPS as a shared identity. The role of EYPS may have disappeared from policy, but its legacy still lives on in the lives of the study participants. Demonstrably, they had all internalised the principles, values and skills of EYPS and continued to exhibit and communicate them as a distinct dimension of their 'possible selves' (Ibarra, 2005; Slay and Smith, 2011) in their new identity. This agentic dimension of their identity was inhabited and experienced differently, but formed a constant within their meaning making.

Knowledge and expertise as a dimension in identity

The dimensions of the EYPS identity carried into their new role included a confidence in pedagogical expertise, particularly for those working with children from birth to three. They were truly interpreters rather than implementers of EYFS (Brogard Clausen,

2015). Participants demonstrated familiarity and confidence with the wider multi-professional role. Confidence in working with parents and the wider community was strikingly expressed through both assurance and agency in their professional ability and in their ownership of this zone of influence and responsibility. Regardless of the setting that they worked in, as the role of Early Years Teacher repositioned itself towards a more inward-looking and education-based model, the participants remained looking outwards into the community, reflecting the original role of EYPS located at the intersection between health, care and education (Lumsden, 2012).

This positioning was reflected in their confidence at working with other professionals: an assurance and familiarity with their position and agency within multi-professional work, which reflected the original construction of an EYP as a professional able to work in a multiplicity of workplaces. This was striking, even when challenged by individual structures and constrained and isolated in other ways. They saw their professional identity inescapably linked with an expertise and ownership of place and agency within a multi-professional approach and brought this expertise and richness into their new identity. There is strong evidence that this values base, particularly the concept of ‘making a difference’, had not shifted but remained constant and visible.

Professional identity in relation to others; issues of power, ownership and status

My findings clearly demonstrate that professional identity is not only embedded within a strong values base or constructed by regulatory initiatives. It is always experienced in relation to others (Maier-Höfer, 2015). My participants’ understanding and ownership of the role of Early Years Teacher was troubled, reflecting fixed and contested boundaries of professional identity, uncomfortably experienced at times. This re-naming from EYP went right to the heart of how they saw themselves. The hesitancy of the participants in naming themselves as teachers evidenced their lack of authentic ownership of this imposed identity as a teacher, as if they were not entitled to it and not confident about exercising it. They expressed this as a concern that they lacked the skills, expertise or authority to exercise the role of ‘teacher’, which they saw as very different to that of EYP. Even Kate, who already had QTS, found the parameters of the new role confusing and positioned or construed herself as a ‘third thing’. This hesitancy

reflected unease that meeting the entry requirements was not enough to become a 'teacher' and concern that the pedagogical freedom that they exercised as an EYP might be lost in the move to school.

Participants felt troubled by a lack of expertise, which they thought they should have as a teacher; almost a feeling of fraudulence as experienced in imposter syndrome (Clance and Imes, 1978). Their unpreparedness for the role was not just a result of the difference in training and accreditation between roles, but because they did not feel ownership of the identity in the same way as they did EYPS. Recognition was a dichotomy. Parents might recognise the term, but being called a teacher was not enough to make them feel like a teacher. In part, this was because of the different pedagogical approach in EYPS, but also because they were given the name without the accompanying pay, conditions and membership of a professional body that normally accompanied the status of 'teacher'. Clearly, issues of standing and professional heritage were still at the forefront of participants' experience. Moreover, being named a 'teacher' did not make their relationships with those with QTS any easier. There were still tensions and hierarchical clashes with the 'real' teachers. In this way, participants always saw and assessed themselves in relation to other members of the group with the identity of 'teacher'.

Reflections on the research process

In IPA, the concept of reflexivity is never straightforward. It permeates the whole process because the researcher must always play a significant part; their role requires acknowledgement and exploration throughout (Biggerstaff and Thomson, 2008). My part in co-creating the data was both exciting and challenging in equal measure. I found the use of Learning Walks as a research instrument extremely effective in allowing me to access the lived experience of participants; meshing the walking and talking felt surprisingly untroubled. It added immeasurably to the richness of my data and allowed participants to focus on what mattered to them and the space to explain this in as much depth as they needed, illustrated as required, enabling the embodied dimensions of phenomenological enquiry to be made explicit. However, I acknowledge that my presence could never be neutral and inevitably altered the lived experience of my participants as I walked with them. Although it was clear that I approached this research from a value base of support for participants, I had to constantly interrogate and

negotiate my own stance and judgments; there were times when I could not suppress my own feelings of despair or frustration at what I was hearing or seeing. For example, one of the participants felt reluctant to share her plans to leave the sector after my research had finished, perhaps feeling that in some way she was letting me down.

There is no doubt that the structure and format of the Learning Walk made it easier to access the lived world of participants but also created inevitable dilemmas. I needed to be vigilant about leading the participant and it took time and practice to be confident about stepping back and letting them talk freely without interruption. I was constantly aware that my interjections and questions could be intrusive or tactless and I worried about the ethics of this. For example, I reflected that my question to Becky, cited earlier, was precipitated by standing beside her and seeing what she saw. However, I tortured myself afterwards at the crass insensitivity of a question that had brought her to tears, in spite of her generous response in our subsequent correspondence. I found the use of a reflective research journal to explore these moments was especially powerful and necessary.

Validation in IPA research can be complex as it is essentially a creative process requiring a flexible approach, but fundamental to this was ensuring that the study focused on ‘a significant experiential domain for the participants’ and that I attended closely to ‘the thing itself’ (Smith et al., 2009:182). I found Yardley’s four principles for quality in research helpful (2000 cited in Smith et al., 2009) and I will address each in turn.

Sensitivity to the context is demonstrated through immersion in the literature related to the early years sector and professional identity, which has helped to orient the study, but more importantly, the close attention, paid to the participants’ accounts helps to defend their integrity. McNamara (2005) believes an important test of validity to be whether the final descriptions resonate with participants. In some IPA studies, data is returned to participants for validation before explication. Although I offered to return the data to participants, I did not seek their validation. I was aware that the co-constructed data was only one version of the reality of their identity (Wiles, 2013). Data was created in time and place and reflected the participants’ construction of meaning at that time. It did not require further clarification.

I have sought to provide transparency and coherence by describing the research process in detail and justifying the use of a phenomenological approach throughout. The challenges of writing a coherent account have been constant and it has been difficult to avoid slipping into other methodological frameworks at times. I recognise that phenomenological enquiry favours the reflective and articulate participant. Here I was fortunate that the very process of gaining EYPS helped considerably in providing me with research subjects whose rich and informed reflections produced such a wealth of data. I recognised that a 'thick and rich description is concrete, exploring a phenomenon in all its experiential ramifications' (Van Manen, 1990:152).

However, the process of phenomenological research writing was both exacting and difficult. I was torn between the tensions of describing and interpreting, reminding myself to avoid the temptation to get side tracked in such rich data. Here I struggled with the principle of commitment and rigour. My dichotomy was to remain true to individual experience and meaning making without drifting away from my research focus, or reverting to seeking and finding pre-determined conceptions. This was the challenge of seeing afresh (Mcnamara, 2005). In phenomenology, the term 'data analysis' can be unhelpful if it implies segmentation and fragmentation of data. Explication is to be preferred as it represents an investigation of constituent parts, whilst retaining the context of the whole (Groenewald, 2004). Mining the rich nuances of my data took time and exacting attention to detail in drafting and redrafting many times.

Strengths of the phenomenological approach

Despite the difficulties identified and discussed here, I would nevertheless argue that the use of an interpretative phenomenological approach has been valuable in eliciting a rich and in-depth articulation of experience, meaning, values and responses from my participants, which I see as one of the key strengths and original features of the thesis. In particular, the constructivist approach of IPA with its emphasis on personal construct theory and psychology has provided a strong methodological and theoretical framework in which to explore the way my participants have constructed and expressed meanings of their enforced transition from EYP to Early Years Teacher because of its embodied, situated and connected approach.

This situated and embodied approach highlights the use of Learning Walks as another original feature of this study, enabling me not only to hear the voices of participants, but

also to hear them contextualised within emotional, lived experience (Mortari, 2015). Gathering data this way allowed the uncovering of affective dimensions of spatiality, time, body and relationships (Van Manen, 1990) in a very explicit and informative way. The richness of the data was both a strength and a challenge when conducting the research. Although I have highlighted some of the dimensions of relationships between data and the place it was gathered during the Learning Walks that foreground elements of spatiality and emotionality, these relationships would benefit from expanded exploration and research in further studies.

Significance of the Study

Yardley's final principle is impact and importance and in the final section I will reflect on the significance of the study. This research demonstrates the continuing difficulties in attempting to impose a professionalisation agenda in a mixed economy where government controls the funding stream for two, three and four-year-olds and businesses are in competition with each other. The challenges of embedding any new professional role are always considerable (Lumsden, 2010). Although the employment of Early Years Teachers as reception class teachers in maintained schools is to be welcomed, concerns persist about their isolation from the core profession of teachers, restricted deployment and limited career progression in schools (Hevey, 2013). Recruitment to the EYITT programme remains problematic (ECSDN, 2016) and it is an irony that most Early Years Teachers are now employed in the school sector (House of Lords, 2015). The two initiatives designed to professionalise and integrate the birth–five workforce have become a key part of a different agenda in the maintained school sector. The failure of this process of professionalisation in the early years through attempts to introduce and extend graduate leadership in the sector is viewed by Lloyd and Hallet (2010) and Moss (2014) as a missed opportunity, merely 'tinkering with an inherently bad system' (Moss, 2016). However, it appears more as an experimental failure; a failure to appreciate the complexities of the sector and a failure of nerve in implementing genuine and sustained transformational change.

Navigating a dual identity within a context of intense policy change can make people feel somewhat stranded, not part of one identity which has disappeared and yet not quite able to take on the new identity without some form of transition or process. Research with teacher educators (Griffiths et al., 2013) shows that some form of supported

transition is helpful to embed confidence and identity in a new role. This process might have been a helpful rite of passage, which could have enabled Early Years Teachers to feel more ownership of their role and signal their change of status to others in the sector, for example through clear guidance on how they might be employed. However, this would still not have addressed the major concern: having the name of teacher without the accompanying marks and rewards of such professional recognition.

How we construct these professional identities is of great significance in the lives of individuals. Colley and Guery (2015) remind us of the personal cost to members in low status 'hybrid' professions when that profession cannot protect either itself or its members from change or extinction. The participants in this study clearly experienced emotional distress and hurt at the dismantling and re-aligning of their roles and several paid a high price in terms of job security and satisfaction. It is telling that of the five participants, only one is still working directly in the sector in a role commensurate with her experience.

This study has provided a significant and original contribution to the field, by charting the construction and perception of professional identities of EYPs/Early Years Teachers at a point of transition, heard through the voices of participants in a traditionally gendered and marginalised workforce. It has added to the discussion about pedagogical choice, highlighting the relative freedom from stricture and conformity felt by those outside the school sector. However, it has also illuminated pervasive issues of status, agency and reward between Early Years Teachers and those with QTS, demonstrating that professional identity is never experienced in a vacuum, but always seen in relation to others. Calls for parity between Early Years Teachers and teachers with QTS continue to be made (Save the Children, 2016) and as the role of Early Years Teacher becomes more embedded, further research should be undertaken which evaluates this new role and its impact in practice. The experience of those who have become Early Years Teachers is an essential part of this. Such research should not ignore the powerful voices of those working in the sector.

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Appendix 1: Early Years Professional Status Standards - 2007

Candidates for EYPS must demonstrate through their practice that they meet all the following Standards.

Knowledge and understanding	
Candidates for Early Years Professional Status must demonstrate through their practice that a secure knowledge and understanding of the following underpins their own practice and informs their leadership of others.	
S1	The principles and content of the Early Years Foundation Stage and how to put them into practice.
S2	The individual and diverse ways in which children develop and learn from birth to the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage and thereafter.
S3	How children's wellbeing, development, learning and behaviour can be affected by a range of influences and transitions from inside and outside the setting.
S4	The main provisions of the national and local statutory, and non-statutory frameworks within which children's services work, and their implications for early years settings.
S5	The current legal requirements, national policies and guidance on health and safety, safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of children and their implications for early years settings.
S6	The contribution that other professionals within the setting and beyond can make to children's physical and emotional wellbeing, development and learning.

Effective practice	
Candidates for Early Years Professional Status must demonstrate through their practice that they meet all the following standards and that they can lead and support others to:	
S7	Have high expectations of all children and commitment to ensuring that they can achieve their full potential.
S8	Establish and sustain a safe, welcoming, purposeful, stimulating and encouraging environment where children feel confident and secure and are able to develop and learn.
S9	Provide balanced and flexible daily and weekly routines that meet children's needs and enable them to develop and learn.

S10	Use close, informed observation and other strategies to monitor children's activity, development and progress systematically and carefully, and use this information to inform, plan and improve practice and provision.
S11	Plan and provide safe and appropriate child-led and adult initiated experiences, activities and play opportunities in indoor, outdoor and in out-of-setting contexts, which enable children to develop and learn.
S12	Select, prepare and use a range of resources suitable for children's ages, interests and abilities, taking account of diversity and promoting equality and inclusion.
S13	Make effective personalised provision for the children they work with.
S14	Respond appropriately to children, informed by how children develop and learn, and a clear understanding of possible next steps in their development and learning.
S15	Support the development of children's language and communication skills.
S16	Engage in sustained shared thinking with children.
S17	Promote positive behaviour, self-control and independence through using effective behaviour management strategies and developing children's social, emotional and behavioural skills.
S18	Promote children's rights, equality, inclusion and anti-discriminatory practice in all aspects of their practice.
S19	Establish a safe environment and employ practices that promote children's health, safety and physical, mental and emotional wellbeing.
S20	Recognise when a child is in danger or at risk of harm and know how to act to protect them.
S21	Assess, record and report on progress in children's development and learning, and use this as a basis for differentiating provision.
S22	Give constructive and sensitive feedback to help children understand what they have achieved and think about what they need to do next and, when appropriate, encourage children to think about, evaluate and improve their own performance.
S23	Identify and support children whose progress, development or wellbeing is affected by changes or difficulties in their personal circumstances and know when to refer them to colleagues for specialist support.
S24	Be accountable for the delivery of high quality provision.

Relationships with children	
Candidates for Early Years Professional Status must demonstrate through their practice that they meet all the following Standards and that they can lead and support others to:	
S25	Establish fair, respectful, trusting, supportive and constructive relationships with children.
S26	Communicate sensitively and effectively with children from birth to the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage.
S27	Listen to children, pay attention to what they say, and value and respect their views.
S28	Demonstrate the positive values, attitudes and behaviour they expect from children.

Communicating and working in partnership with families and carers	
Candidates for Early Years Professional Status must demonstrate through their practice that they meet all the following Standards and that they can lead and support others to:	
S29	Recognise and respect the influential and enduring contribution that families and parents/carers can make to children's development, wellbeing and learning.
S30	Establish fair, respectful, trusting and constructive relationships with families and parents/carers, and communicate sensitively and effectively with them.
S31	Work in partnership with families and parents/carers, at home and in the setting, to nurture children, to help them develop and to improve outcomes for them.
S32	Provide formal and informal opportunities through which information about children's wellbeing, development and learning can be shared between the setting and families and parents/carers.

Teamwork and collaboration	
Candidates for Early Years Professional Status must demonstrate that they:	
S33	Establish and sustain a culture of collaborative and co-operative working between colleagues.
S34	Ensure that colleagues working with them understand their role and are involved appropriately in helping children to meet planned objectives.
S35	Influence and shape the policies and practices of the setting, and share in collective responsibility for their implementation.
S36	Contribute to the work of a multi-professional team and, where appropriate, co-ordinate and implement agreed programmes and interventions on a day-to-day basis.

Professional development

Candidates for Early Years Professional Status must demonstrate through their practice that they meet all the following Standards and that they can lead and support others to:

S37	Develop and use skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology to support their work with children and wider professional activities.
S38	Reflect on and evaluate the impact of practice, modifying approaches where necessary, and take responsibility for identifying and meeting their professional development needs.
S39	Take a creative and constructively critical approach towards innovation, and adapt practice if benefits and improvements are identified.

Appendix 2 - EYPS Standards 2012

An Early Years Professional must:	
1.	Support the healthy growth and development of children from birth to the age of five.
1.1	Know and understand how children learn and develop and how this can be affected by individual circumstances.
1.2	Support individual children through all areas of learning and development as outlined in the EYFS.
1.3	Encourage and support children's learning in ways that are appropriate to their development.
1.4	Support children through a range of transitions.
1.5	Know when a child is in need of support and when to refer to other relevant services.

An Early Years Professional must:	
2.	Work directly with children and in partnership with their families to facilitate learning and support development.
2.1	Understand the important influence of parents/carers, engaging them effectively to support their child's wellbeing, learning and development.
2.2	Communicate effectively with children from birth to age five, listening and responding sensitively.
2.3	Promote positive social and emotional behaviour, attitudes and independence.
2.4	Know and understand the significance of attachment and how effectively to promote it.
2.5	Develop and sustain respectful relationships with children and their families.

An Early Years Professional must:	
3.	Safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
3.1	Know the legal requirements and guidance on health and safety, safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and the implications for early years settings.
3.2	Establish and sustain a safe environment and employ practices that promote children's health and safety.

3.3	Know and understand child protection policies and procedures, recognise when a child is in danger or at risk of abuse, and know how to act to protect them.
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An Early Years Professional must:	
4.	Set high expectations which inspire, motivate and challenge every child.
4.1	Establish and sustain a stimulating and inclusive environment where children feel confident and are able to learn and develop.
4.2	Engage in sustained shared thinking with children.
4.3	Give constructive feedback to help children evaluate their achievements and facilitate further learning.
4.4	Demonstrate the positive values, attitudes and behaviours expected from children.

An Early Years Professional must:	
5.	Make use of observations and assessment to meet the individual needs of every child.
5.1	Observe, assess, record and report on progress in children's development and learning, using this to plan next steps.
5.2	Engage effectively with parents/carers and wider professionals in the ongoing assessment and appropriate provision for each child.
5.3	Differentiate provision to meet the individual needs of the child and provide opportunities to extend their learning and development.

An Early Years Professional must:	
6.	Plan provision taking account of the individual needs of every child.
6.1	Provide balanced and flexible daily and weekly routines that meet children's needs and interests and enable them to learn and develop.
6.2	Plan and provide appropriate adult led and child initiated play and experiences that enable children to learn and develop.
6.3	Select, prepare and use a range of resources suitable for children's ages, interests and abilities, which value diversity, and promote equality and inclusion.

An Early Years Professional must:	
7.	Fulfil wider professional responsibilities by promoting positive partnership working to support the child.
7.1	Understand the importance of and contribute to multi-agency team working.
7.2	Take a lead in establishing and sustaining a culture of co-operative working between colleagues and wider professionals.
7.3	Support colleagues to understand the part they play to enable every child to reach their full potential.

An Early Years Professional must:	
8.	Lead practice and foster a culture of continuous improvement.
8.1	Model and implement effective practice, and support and mentor other practitioners.
8.2	Reflect on the effectiveness of provision, propose appropriate changes and influence, shape and support the implementation of policies and practices within the setting.
8.3	Take responsibility for improving practice through appropriate professional development, for self and colleagues.
8.4	Promote equality of opportunity through championing children's rights and anti-discriminatory practice.
8.5	Understand the implications of relevant legislation, statutory frameworks, including the EYFS, and policy for early years settings and apply in practice.

Appendix 3: Early Years Teachers' Standards – Early Years 2013

An Early Years Teacher must:	
1.	Set high expectations which inspire, motivate and challenge all children.
1.1	Establish and sustain a safe and stimulating environment where children feel confident and are able to learn and develop.
1.2	Set goals that stretch and challenge children of all backgrounds, abilities and dispositions.
1.3	Demonstrate and model the positive values, attitudes and behaviours expected of children.

An Early Years Teacher must:	
2.	Promote good progress and outcomes by children.
2.1	Be accountable for children's progress, attainment and outcomes.
2.2	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of how babies and children learn and develop.
2.3	Know and understand attachment theories, their significance and how effectively to promote secure attachments.
2.4	Lead and model effective strategies to develop and extend children's learning and thinking, including sustained shared thinking.
2.5	Communicate effectively with children from birth to age five, listening and responding sensitively.
2.6	Develop children's confidence, social and communication skills through group learning.
2.7	Understand the important influence of parents and/or carers, working in partnership with them to support the child's wellbeing, learning and development.

An Early Years Teacher must:	
3.	Demonstrate good knowledge of early learning and EYFS.
3.1	Have a secure knowledge of early childhood development and how that leads to successful learning and development at school.
3.2	Demonstrate a clear understanding of how to widen children's experience and raise their expectations.

3.3	Demonstrate a critical understanding of the EYFS areas of learning and development and engage with the educational continuum of expectations, curricula and teaching of Key Stage 1 and 2.
3.4	Demonstrate a clear understanding of systematic synthetic phonics in the teaching of early reading.
3.5	Demonstrate a clear understanding of appropriate strategies in the teaching of early mathematics.

An Early Years Teacher must:	
4.	Plan education and care taking account of the needs of all children.
4.1	Observe and assess children's development and learning, using this to plan next steps.
4.2	Plan balanced and flexible activities and educational programmes that take into account the stage of development, circumstances and interests of children.
4.3	Promote a love of learning and stimulate children's intellectual curiosity in partnership with parents and/or carers.
4.4	Use a variety of teaching approaches to lead group activities appropriate to the age range and ability of children.
4.5	Reflect on the effectiveness of teaching activities and educational programmes to support the continuous improvement of provision.

An Early Years Teacher must:	
5.	Adapt education and care to respond to the strengths and needs of all children.
5.1	Have a secure understanding of how a range of factors can inhibit children's learning and development and how best to address these.
5.2	Demonstrate an awareness of the physical, emotional, social, intellectual development and communication needs of babies and children, and know how to adapt education and care to support children at different stages of development.
5.3	Demonstrate a clear understanding of the needs of all children, including those with special educational needs and disabilities, and be able to use and evaluate distinctive approaches to engage and support them.
5.4	Support children through a range of transitions.

5.5	Know when a child is in need of additional support and how this can be accessed, working in partnership with parents and/or carers and other professionals.
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An Early Years Teacher must:	
6.	Make accurate and productive use of assessment.
6.1	Understand and lead assessment within the framework of the EYFS framework, including statutory assessment requirements (see annex 1).
6.2	Engage effectively with parents and/or carers and other professionals in the ongoing assessment and provision for each child.
6.3	Give regular feedback to children and parents and/or carers to help children progress towards their goals.

An Early Years Teacher must:	
7.	Safeguard and promote the welfare of children, and provide a safe learning environment.
7.1	Know and act upon the legal requirements and guidance on health and safety, safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child.
7.2	Establish and sustain a safe environment and employ practices that promote children's health and safety.
7.3	Know and understand child protection policies and procedures, recognise when a child is in danger or at risk of abuse, and know how to act to protect them.

An Early Years Teacher must:	
8.	Fulfil wider professional responsibilities.
8.1	Promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice.
8.2	Make a positive contribution to the wider life and ethos of the setting.
8.3	Take a lead in establishing a culture of co-operative working between colleagues, parents and/or carers and other professionals.
8.4	Model and implement effective education and care, and support and lead other practitioners including Early Years Educators.

8.5	Take responsibility for leading practice through appropriate professional development for self and colleagues.
8.6	Reflect on and evaluate the effectiveness of provision, and shape and support good practice.
8.7	Understand the importance of and contribute to multi-agency team working.

Appendix 4: Fig. 2 Data Collection Schedule

Pseudonym	LW 1	LW2	LW3
Becky	09.01.2014	14.07.2014	09.12.2014
Kate	08.01.2014	02.06.2014	Interview 11.12.2014
Gael	17.01.2014	03.06.2014	11.12.2014
Maddie	09.01.2014	18.06.2014	16.12.2014
Nina	15.01.2014	10.06.2014	02.02.2015

Appendix 5: Kate, Learning Walk 1 Transcript

Researcher *Now this technique is unusual in that it's a co-constructed interview. Now you might say every interview is co-constructed and you'd be right, but how it is is this. I've got some prompts but I don't want to ask you questions because if I do I will influence the way you answer them by when I ask you them. In other words, if I ask you something first, you might think that's the most important thing I'm interested in, so I'm going to let you talk. This is all about you. This is all about you and your practice. You can say anything you like, but if we haven't covered certain areas by the end I might say could you tell me about this, but otherwise we are absolutely open to you. This is you, your practice, you as a teacher, you as an EYP, whatever you were or are.*

Kate Are, yes

But you're now an early years teacher and you can talk about anything you like and if people interrupt us we don't care because it's just part of your daily life and interestingly – I'm just going to say it here to remind me – it's interesting the parking thing when I arrived, so you're here but there's no parking for you, but the school is there and they've got plenty of parking.

Oh yes, it's very interesting. [Laughs]

And interestingly you're sort of here but you're not

...not part of it

You're not part of it, are you, and that was very interesting

There is definitely a barrier there. There's definitely a sort of, it's a strange set-up, it's gone through cycles, it's gone through phases where prior to the school perhaps becoming an academy we had leagues, there was there were ways of working together and we definitely need to work more closely together, but it still, we are now very much children's centre and school.

Is it worse since it became an academy?

Yes.

Do you have the same head as you had when you had an academy?

No, it's been through quite a few heads. I've been here five years and I think, I think, I haven't even met this head I don't think

So they haven't come to talk to you?

No, no. It's interesting. The previous heads have been my performance manager and that's worked to a certain degree, so I've had conversations with them but with regard to relationships with the general running of the children's centres no. Having said that, the manager here is on the Board of Governors so –

Of the children's centre?

No, the manager of the children's centre here is on the governors of the school.

Okay fine

Or was. I think that's very sort of

So that's where the connection is

Yes.

So this was purpose built, or is it part of the old school?

No, it's purpose built on the car park. They released the land so it could be built.

So it's purpose-built. Okay.

And the idea was you know the whole sort of remit of looking at the wider holistic approach of looking at families and young children it was all-encompassing within the school. It was as a children's centre should be set up, but they've also now got a nursery, whereas we've also got a daycare nursery and originally we were all in the same building. I mean I'll take you down to the end of the, the end of this building and that's where they were sited, so you had a school nursery and a daycare nursery all in the same sort of building and we were almost in competition with each other. There's so much I could tell you about...

That's what I'm here for. Now if I ask you, is there any way you can hold that (recorder) without putting your hand over the thing, and I'll hold this one. And then between us we'll get the – am I safe to leave my bag here?

Probably better in that office where there are people. Or... I'll tell you what we could also do, we could go back in here and I'll close the door and it's – that will be fine

I don't want to prevent anyone using the photocopier or anything but please...talk to me about what you want

Okay

Let's go wherever you want

Okay. So we've got the – this is the main building, it is a new build, we're in Phase 1, we're in round one children's centre, so it's purpose built, and this is kind of the administrative office, but we also hot seat. Wednesdays is a particularly sort of busy day where we really do move around desks and everything but we've got the administrator and the receptionist...

Hello

...who dovetail on a Wednesday and we've got our apprentice as well who works here, who puts up with me and who does everything

[laughs]

And then through here we've got the manager of the daycare, who's sitting in there at the moment

I don't know the code – so many codes...

Hello

The manager of the daycare, this is Liz

[talking together]

I mentioned earlier if I can walk around your lovely setting. But we've worked really closely together over the years, but perhaps less so now because you've got your own early years professional status person

Oh, have you?

So from about September

Who I met in your office

Yep, yeah

I've started to sort of, I'm still here for any advice, anything... I still pop in and do things, but perhaps less so now I've started to move more out into the community so I do a similar role to what I was doing here but now I work out at xxxxxxx in a nursery there.

And are they a link nursery for you?

Well this one was our link nursery so now that one is also our link nursery

So just out of interest, what do you see the role of the early years professional?

(EYP) What, when xxxxxx was doing it?

Yeah.

(EYP) Well just a general support I think. Ideas, help...You helped me a lot, didn't you, when I came into the role because obviously I'd not done it before

(EYP) Lead practice, lead good practice, always, you do. We know. Yeah, just there to support and guide and help. Whenever we need anything xxxxx always is there, aren't you?

Try to be. Try to be.

But we've got a lovely relationship which is really nice. And you helped me with my dissertation and everything and this is where a lot of it was done, was based.

So am I okay to take the children round then?

[Talking together]

Okay.

Thank you xxxx

Okay, so now we're going into the daycare which again, as I explained, they're half expecting us and again I've always felt very relaxed in coming here. I haven't had to formally invite myself; I can just wander in and out all day every day and when I first started here in my role I was, I was very much stationed here, I was based here. I worked two and a half days a week and a whole day was spent here. It was never in ratio. I would just work wherever I needed to be, so it could be in the baby room, it could be in the over-two room, and I would lead practice or I would, sometimes I – initially when I was first introducing the idea of learning journals I would actually even release staff for an hour so that they could go away and do it because five years ago they hadn't really got to grips with learning journals or any of the things that they now do.

So with the learning journals you kind of introduced it, led it, and then gradually withdrew so they took over?

Yes, but basically that's very much how my role has been. Whatever I've introduced it's either been through training or through one-to-one guidance, talking to them. I've always introduced it, I've supported, led the way and then basically slightly withdrawn but always been on hand to support if need be.

Yes

And that's very much how my manager now sees my role here. I've been quite intensive supporting here, I'm gradually now sort of withdrawing so that I can focus on other things, go and do the same thing elsewhere.

So what you're talking about is actually practice, isn't it? It's the leadership of practice.

Oh yes, very much so, but it's very much about – the leadership is about democracy. It's leading democratically. It's leading by example. It's getting involved, it's getting... I would never expect anyone to do anything if I can't do it myself, you know, it's kind of...

So it's about... I'm trying to understand... what you're saying is it's about empowering other people.

Very much so, very much so.

And that's how you see, that's how you see it?

Yes, yes.

It's interesting because it sounds like the kind of construction of what leadership is within EYPS. Now, so that's you. Is that you as an EYP or a QTS?

Or is it me as a person?

Or is it you as a person?

It's – I have drawn upon all the different types of leadership skills that I have amassed over the... it's me as an experienced practitioner, I think.

It's you as an experienced practitioner.

I just know that people take on board things most if, if they – if you're doing it with them, if you're working alongside them, they can see the sense of it, if they can understand the process, if they feel supported every step of the way really.

Yeah

And I don't tend to do – I don't stand up and talk and say this is the way you've got to do it; it's all about listening to them and adapting and everything I say and do I try and incorporate what they want to see

So they've got ...ownership?

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah

So here we've got the under-twos and again yeah it's interesting because I think my experience of the birth to the three year olds, birth to the two year olds, really came through the EYPS. I must say that it really helped consolidate my understanding of that whole range of development, so working in... when I was doing my EYPS I had to do the hundred hours...of birth to two and that really helped I think because then, when I first came here, I was very much in the over-two room okay and that was seen to be start there yeah start there, so then I had to build up that relationship, I had to build up that trust, people had to sort of know where I was coming from if you like and then I was allowed to sort of work in the under-twos room. It kind of felt as if I wasn't so far divorced from the whole nursery sort of beliefs and philosophies and everything else. I wasn't coming in as a teacher. I was suspicious, you know people were suspicious when I

first came in, of what's this teacher going to be like, is she going to be so formal and sort of you know we all do this way kind of thing, so I had to sort of really make sure that people understood where my philosophies lay and where my pedagogies lay and then they let me in so ...

What have you drawn on? You talked about your pedagogy, talked about your EYPS, but what *about your pedagogy that you draw on? Where does it come from? Does it come from... where does it come from?*

Interesting, very interesting because I'm a bit of a – I've morphed, I almost think of myself, yeah I've kind of ... it's not the obvious kind of, it's not the obvious, it's not the obvious pathway for a teacher to take and I have gradually changed. Where it happened was when I was still in a school environment, I was in a Foundation Stage unit and that's where the scales dropped from my eyes if you like. I was, up until that point, a fairly regular teacher. I was a reception class teacher, then we opened up a Foundation Stage unit and I had a lot of my beliefs, a lot of my thoughts and understanding of pedagogy there really questioned and it was uncomfortable, very uncomfortable.

And the Foundation Stage leader came in who wanted to bring this together and I remember thinking oh but they'll just run wild, they'll just – how can you let them have all this freedom, how can you let them have all this sort of play opportunities and everything. Hello sweetheart, have you got a book to show me? Thank you. Hello. How lovely, that's a lovely little gift.

I like the way *she passes it on to someone else. Almost like I can't put this down so you use it while I go and do something else*

[General chat...]

No I definitely think that was a real awakening for me, so this happened round about the same time as I was doing my EYPS. That kind of pushed me, you know I was uncomfortable; I needed something to really try and help me along that journey. I knew I wanted more. I wanted

to understand more and I knew it was the right thing. It felt right, but it really left me feeling quite uncomfortable. At the same time at my previous place, the school, we had just opened up a children's centre so again all three things were happening at once and that's what made me realise that was the future for education, that was where I wanted to be. I wanted to be looking at the whole sort of family, the whole development of the child and I just knew that children's centres would make a difference to young children.

And this is the over-twos and again it's fairly empty because everyone is outside [laughs] which is how it should be. Okay when I've been in here things, I dunno, you've really run with this but the communication-friendly space was something I was quite interested in a long while ago.

(Practitioner) It wasn't there originally, and then we just swapped it over to the side but you'd kind of, because our book area – and you came in, was it one weekend, and we came back and it was beautiful and we were like that's how we want the whole room.

Yeah, it was kind of just leading through practice and doing practical things, trying to support through showing, you know - visual things really. And then it was lovely because years later you then got rid of the tables and the seating and then oh here they come ...

(Practitioner) Oh yeah they told us we got some input saying take away chairs; children don't need the chairs. We were like, we were really reluctant to do that, but we took away the chairs and it's worked beautifully and the tables have gone.

Oh I like the black and white ..

[Talking together]

Absolutely

No, it's really freed up the space. Really. Now I'm just going to show Liz outside [laughs] the famous mud pit [laughs] and again I really did do a lot of work out in the garden. My passion is outdoor work and I think there was a change – we worked hard to change the philosophies, the pedagogies of practitioners. It was very gradual. Very gradual. It was very – and what happened was that they were worried, they were so, they were making, they wanted to make everything that they did count towards the EYFS, you know, towards the Early Years attainments and the targets and gradually you know we've managed to really transform... so you can see a lot more of the loose carts a lot more of the freedom of movement, a lot more of following the child's interest. I've set up a mud kitchen [laughs] on the benches over on as you see yeah but really it's again it hasn't always been straightforward. I've had a lot of times where people have really questioned and argued and sort of explored the whole issues that I'm – that sort of move away from the product and move towards understanding the process and everything else and really the questioning, the interrogations, now people are less inclined to do that kind of thing.

Do you think, what was it that gave you the confidence when you were challenged? What is it that gives you the *confidence when you're challenged to see something through, or to adapt it* and change it?

I'm happy to – I will always listen, I will always want to understand – what gives me the confidence? It feels right... hello sweetheart...(laughs)... people, everybody takes on board different things at different times in different ways and it's remaining opening, remaining listening, remaining in dialogue, remaining talking and just because one way doesn't work it's kind of looking at different ways to try and broach the subject in different ways to sort of

Do you feel now when you look around here, do you feel happy with what has been achieved here?

Yes, yeah. Yes, yes. There are still times when I have to really bite my tongue sometimes and don't say things and I don't know... there are times when I hear something and it makes me

cringe a little bit and I think okay there's still a level of understanding there that is, that needs some [21.34] but it's not really my position now and you can't do everything, you know, you can only go with people and they will only take on board things that they want to know and hear and learn about and things so...

What do you think parents see when they see what's happening here?

Interesting again, they understand it. It's not as – they don't sort of meet with such resistance as perhaps you may have thought – I don't think you do

No, I...

I think it's quite interesting. The more I speak to parents and the more I talk to them, the more the practitioners talk to them, the more they have that belief in their own pedagogy, their own philosophies, their own ways of working. The more they are able to speak with confidence that play is valuable, it's about valuing play isn't it and it's about really – and the more that they talk about that with parents, the more parents understand. We've held parent meetings, I've held parent training, talks to parents, all sorts of things, where you're gradually always saying the same message and it – I think people's perception of their children's childhood is changing. It has changed, or will change, or... we mustn't think from the deficit point of view, we mustn't think that they're always going to be so negative about things, especially when you see that children are happy. They are so happy.

So engaged

You know and it's pointing out that learning to the parents and looking – and once you do that and that can be done in a whole host of ways and – but again it's empowering the practitioners so that they are able to go forward and talk to the parents and they do; they do a good job. And if they're not happy, they take their children away because it's paid for, isn't it? It's their

prerogative. And interestingly again, when I first came here, this room here – we can go through if you like – it was, this is what I meant by the school's nursery, so this whole room it was beautifully equipped, you know, you couldn't have wished for a better setting. It's now, I mean I can go into the empty room – it had, it had everything, but they shared this outdoor space.

So the school have moved their nursery ...

Yes moved their nursery to the school now, but basically there was a conflict of pedagogies going on between the teacher and between the setting and there was a real battle if you like going on. The school setting was quite formal, quite structured, and they had their attainments to reach, they had their targets to reach, they had the charts to tick and they had all the evidence that they had to amass because you've got the school pressure and the head pressure and all the way down, um... and then you had what we were trying to implement and have implemented here is this value of play, this exploration of freedom and risk-taking and adventure and everything else and the two things I'm afraid just didn't sit side by side and I, part of my role was to talk to the teacher here and I did, I did a lot of sort of conversations with her.

She was employed by whom.

By the school.

By the school, just to clarify it in my mind.

Yeah

She was employed by the school. Okay. Fine.

And it was – so we had originally twenty children from the nursery and twenty children from our nursery in the outside environment with lots of different practitioners all working from different remits. It was quite a tense time and I know if the teacher came out here now she

would absolutely hate what she saw now. It was just so diametrically opposite to how she would want to do it and again that's not necessarily a criticism, you know different people have different and

Because you're a teacher as well

Yes. And that helped to some extent, to some extent until she got to know me. She would talk to me

Would she talk to the others?

No. So we set up a dialogue about tracking children and again there was a real feeling that it was a them and us. It was a real feeling of they are only childcare assistants, they don't really – there really was that feeling. It was quite horrible to witness and to listen to.

It's just so interesting. The empty room is a symbol, isn't it?

Yes and the cut off is... a complete symbol

And now it's standing empty

I know. And it's such a shame. Is this (tape) working? Oh no, it's not. I think you must have – yes, it is working. Can I get through these rooms [laughs]. The glorious empty room. So this was kitted out with the best equipment you could possibly want for an early years setting and the space, but that partition wall never, ever came down. The whole premise of opening up this children's centre was to have fully-integrated nursery and if they had the right person, in a way like if I'd got here earlier, I would have had that open, I would have had a fully-integrated kind of maintained nursery with a daycare nursery and we would have had wraparound care and you know... I can see how it can work, but it really is hard to expect. You have to have the right

mentality, you have to have seen it in action, you have to believe in the philosophy to be able to do it, but to have those doors open and that sort of beautiful big outdoor space and now it's left empty and nobody can use it in case the local authority..

So show me where the nursery...

Now... Yes. It's in that building there

That building there

Where it's got the rainbow doors.

And what's it look like inside?

I've never been in there now.

Oh, you've never been in there?

No, no not now. I used to come in here. There's also the sensory room next door. I can't, once I go out I can't come back, but the sensory room's there. We still use the sensory room when we come around.

You can't use this one?

No. Not at – no. What might eventually happen, the daycare nursery might eventually, money allowing they may open up and they may be able to rent this space and then they would have three separate rooms sort of thing for the whole thing, but it really is indicative of what, of what, of what of the relationship between the school and the children's centre and the daycare.

And for your role, you've got unique viewpoint because you see – you have been in a school.

Yes, I know exactly how they....

You can speak the language

And I have the professional bearing and that did come across, I must admit, you know –

Do you think that helped you?

Oh, yes, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Was it using the language, the professional bearing? What was it?

I think it was kudos, I think it was – I think it's because the person I was talking to recognised that I knew how things were in a school environment. It is about talking the same language; it's about understanding the pressures that they're under and the, and the expectations that they've got to meet. But if you've been so used to working in schools and you've never really come across a nursery kind of, a daycare kind of establishment, it's just beyond your, it's out of your remit, it's out of your world, you don't really know what it entails. It's foreign, I suppose.

That little girl. I'm just watching. She's so sweet. She's obviously sat in some mud (laughs)

Yeah. But you know but we really just had such different philosophies, such different pedagogies, because you know it really was line up and let's all sort of come in and sit down and let's do this activity together and then it was walking out again and it was, it was just so – [not sure who says this next bit: even if I was in a nursery school now I wouldn't do that]

I wouldn't do it that way.

It's so sad.

Do you think the way you are with the staff here, do you feel, where does that come from because would you be like that if you were a teacher in school and you had staff, so you had teaching assistants for example.

Yes

You would still be the same?

Yeah, respectful and um um ...

Do you think ...

Appreciative?

Do you have more of a leadership role there than you have here? Do you think if you were in a class you would have a stronger leadership role?

No. No, no. [Laughs] Actually I've got more of a leadership role here in a wider variety, varied role, and I haven't even touched that aspect of it. I've only really touched one-third of my role.

Talk to me about the rest of your role.

Well let's walk around and then you can see.

You go through and I'll follow

(Enters room)

Thank you, xxxxx Thank you. (practitioner opens door)

[children talking]

And again a lot of these children , xxxxx in particular, I've worked with their parents upstairs in the role of, in my capacity as a children's centre teacher.

[hammering]

Do you see what I mean?

And again, is this indicative, I don't know. Upstairs we've got the main children's centre kind of work takes place. Again outside, I'll just briefly show you outside. This is the – again I work hard trying to build links between the two aspects of this building – it really is, people really don't like working together, do they? And again there is still an element of well they've used all the dishwasher stuff, or they've used all this, or they've used all that, oh they've created the mess out there and it's like oh please we're all working together to the same aim here, you know we're working with the families of our community sort of thing. So in the past I have opened up all of this and allowed you know children have been free to roam up here as well, but there is still that division.

There's physical barriers and mental barriers

Yes, very much so. And I'm the lynchpin, I'm kind of the middle-man and I do try and play the balance, I try and explain each other's point of view and try to keep the communications flowing [laughs].

Anyway.

That is a very splendid bird feeder

Yes. This is where the children's centre, the stay-and-play group happens. At the moment we've got baby weighing clinic. Again if I was building this children's centre, my one regret, I love the building, I wish we had easy access to the outside environment. We cannot do it. It's so hard.

So... midwives

Yeah

Staff room, which is lovely because of the nice big space, toilet, kitchen

So, the health visitor, are they timetabled clinics or just call in?

They're timetabled, but again if the health visitor – we work quite closely with the health visitor, so if this space is not ideal for parents and children to wait, it's not conducive, especially when we've got a stay-and-play session going on, the children want to come in, so we always say come in, the health visitor will come and fish you out sort of thing, so that's really nice, so I do actually work quite closely... we, we work quite closely with the midwife and the health visitor and if I need things expedited, if I need, if I have concerns I can often, I've often used that sort of facility where I can talk to the health visitor or the community nurse and say look, we've got these concerns, please can you, you know, bring the area review forward and things like that. Oh, I mean just a display – it's a bit tatty now – but that was something I did because I believe I use every aspect, everything at my disposal to inform, to enlighten- you know to enrich, to get messages across, to let people, to celebrate... whatever I can do, I will do it, so you know well who would have thought that that's part of a teaching role, but I'm using my skills of display

You're using your teaching skills in nursery

Yes, I know the importance of displays. I know how they can celebrate things and push things and people they emulate, they copy, they do things, you know, it's leading practice again, it gets the message across, it celebrates our children, it celebrates our families. The next one that's going up is about crawling, so you know I sort of look at children's developments – just another avenue of you know

Yeah

Anyway, you're welcome to come in here, so at the moment here this is our [group?] room if you like and this is multi-purpose, so today we've got our baby clinic and our weighing clinic with our health visitor there, and other times it's a stay-and-play session – you know, group room. And we can also divide the two areas so we can have two small groups going, we can have a crèche happening while parents you know... we can have parenting courses going on, things like that, but I personally run two groups here on a Thursday, so that's part of my face-to-face time with parents and children and again I have led new practice through working alongside colleagues and really setting the benchmark I suppose of trying to ensure that we get – I hate to say it, but the quality. I want the quality. The quality experience and the quality sort of environments

So this is a main contact with parents

Yes, yes, so twice a week I run a group in the morning, the emphasis is physical development but it still, it encompasses all the areas within the EYPS, and I suppose parents are always talking to me about it and they're always saying this is better than any nursery that I've – you know I try and emulate how I would set up a nursery so I would have you know six areas going on, a mix of activities. Now let me introduce you as well. This is xxxxx.

Hello

[Talking together]

XXXXXXX is our community involvement worker as well, so ...

Yeah, yeah again we work very closely together, especially on the Thursday afternoon, when we run a group together, which used to be a yap (young parents) but now it's a..

[Talking together]

So again,

There's some lovely resources here, aren't there?

Yes, I'm responsible for trying to resource and make sure it's all accessible.

So you select the resources?

I haven't – sometimes I do. When I first arrived, there were a lot more things here already. We had a sort of set up, start-up kit but now I advise so again if people are thinking about getting things I'd like to say I think that's a waste of money or I think you should be going ahead and doing that kind of thing. It has to be quite – it's very difficult. You can't really set it up as you would do a classroom because everything has to be movable so that when we've got clinics and other things like that, that room in particular has to be able to empty it so we can have messy play because you know you can clean it all down sort of thing, but it's still trying to make – you're not seeing it at its best

?, which it really should be. Yeah, yeah,

You should never see an empty children's centre.

It's basically – so just talk me through... whose responsibility would it be to resource this room? Who actually is responsible for it?

The manager, I guess. Well the manager has the bottom line. I can advise and I say what I need, but the bottom – I can't actually go ahead, I don't have a budget

You don't have a budget. A budget isn't devolved to you to be able to...

No, I often think it should be but no. Because yes, money has been spent on things that I wouldn't necessarily have bought, but, hey ho.

So who are the other people here? Are they volunteers? Or are they – because you've got the *Health Visitor in the purple, who is...*

Yes

...parents, who are the other people?

Do you know, I'm not sure. I don't really know. Sorry. Again, this is interesting, I don't normally work on a Wednesday. Because I'm very flexible it just means I get time off in lieu so... I need to... um... I've often wanted the budget, I've often wanted to be able resource things, so you know –heuristic play – that was something I'd been doing or I would um... just trying to think. I'm also responsible for input, not just in this children's centre but in other children's centres as well now

Right

And that's to do with play and development. So I would go along to the post-natal classes and I would talk to parents about play and development –I'm wheeled in for that and I'm also

responsible for delivering the Every Child a Talker so I do lots of work with communication environments and we have ECAT weeks and ECAT events and stuff like that, so I do a lot of that kind of work as well.

So which – where is the remit of all of *the children's centre that you cover*.

No. At the moment I think therein lies the change. I think this is – I'm coming on to that. I work quite closely with our sister children's centre now and but that's only happened in the last eighteen months right, but what I see happening now is there are eight children's centres in the whole of xxxx; there's only one QT

That's you

Which is myself and basically what I'm now being asked to do, just in the last few months by the District Manager, is to uniform the planning, unify the planning and the tracking and everything else they want to happen, across the Swale children's centres and I'm actually in the process now of devising training for that and on January 24th I'll be delivering that to – we're closing all the centres down and I'll be sort of presenting all that kind of work. But then I foresee my role becoming more of a quality assurance and sort of going around. I want to unify the tracking and I want to really pull all the data together. I will be taking on more and more of that role if I'm still employed, which I don't know.

They are doing another consultation are they?

Yes. So what I think will happen they will take me off, they'll give me an option of coming off the QT role pay and conditions, they'll have me more as a sort of advisor across the children's centres in xxxx if I go onto (Local Authority) pay and conditions.

And would they then employ an EYP in this children's centre instead?

No, I shouldn't think so. I don't think they – at the moment... they would have liked to at one time, but now they can't really. I don't think the finances are there. So I think what will happen is they'll have somebody – either an EYP or a QT – who's prepared to take on that consultative kind of role, but not working directly with families. I think that will happen. I think when people understand my role and that's always been the quandary – people don't always understand kind of what I do

And you know because every children's centre, every area of the country has a different model.

Yes, yes. Very much so.

so it's trying to get your head around what this particular model is here

Yes. And we've very much been allowed to be creative – which is good. Everybody's being allowed to do their own thing, which is good because then you actually get, you get a lot of innovation and creativity going on, but at the cost of unifying the practice and everybody sort of having the same remit and values I suppose.

(Leaving room)

I guess that now

That's my manager. You probably do know her

[Ye she was on one of my courses.]

Yes, she did the [talking together] Yes, yes, yes. She recognised... she knew who you were.

She's my manager. So

Excellent so. I think we're almost – we're almost out of time, so can I just go through some – I think you have covered pretty well everything. I've asked you about the word 'teacher' and you've talked about that. There's one question really. There's only one thing which is about the EYPS standards and the QTS standards. Can you think back to your QTS about the standards? You have talked to me about EYPS which is great. But what about QTS – or is it so long ago....

No, no, no – please let me explore that one.

Explore that one. I'm trying to think about how you see yourself. Do you always see yourself because you have QTS, do you always at the baseline see yourself as a teacher? What do you think about being now called an Early Years Teacher, rather than an Early Years Professional?

My instant reaction to all of that – I no longer really see myself as a teacher.

You don't. Okay.

But then I don't think anybody in my position really would. I don't know. I don't think of myself as being an Early Years Professional either. I see myself as being a third thing. I don't know what it is

Which is...?

I don't know. I don't think there are that many of us around. I've taken all of the attributes of teaching and all the skills, all the experience that I've gained over the years of being a teacher, and that's not just in early years, that's right across the spectrum, and I've led with ICT and I've led with science, I've done all sorts of you know leading subjects and that kind of thing so it's not just teaching. I've pulled all that and everything I've learned from the EYP, which I at the time I do remember feeling that it made me more confident and that it did something to my confidence. It did something to my leadership skills identifying as a leader.

And that would be different to your QTS which didn't have anything about leadership

No, no, no, no. Not at all, but you're right it was so long ago, yeah. But I may actually... I've become this sort of third person. I don't know, this a new sort of breed but actually I'm so grateful to being, I can really sort of see so many good qualities there and I'm yeah, I'm so thankful. I'm not sure I would ever go back into teaching because

Because?

Because I don't think I can handle the politics, the way of viewing early years in schools, which I'm not a hundred percent happy – you've really got to find the right environment, or I would have to find

You said something earlier. I was trying to remember what you said. I can't remember it, but you said something like – oh, it's gone, but I'll remember it again in a minute. Something you said which I was going to pick up on, which was this thing about the pedagogy – that's it... you said I've got far more pedagogical freedom

Yeah

...than I would have in school

Well and leadership freedom

And leadership freedom

Yes, yes very much so. I mean this role has been a joy to create and develop and if you consider it, I lead practice with early years practitioners, I lead practice with colleagues from all sorts of from the multi-discipline, from multi

Backgrounds, yeah

Yeah, but then again and ... um... now it's starting to transfer out into the community so I work now quite extensively with childminders

Oh, do you?

And I do a lot of work with childminders and again

What do you do with childminders?

I've run training in the south east for childminders, The South East Forum, so I've been down to Sussex and done big sort of training conferences if you like for... um all about creativity I suppose because that's my thing really [laughs]. I'm quite creative, creativity in its true sense. And then I also run little groups, little you know story sack groups or whatever, whatever the need is, whatever they tell me they would like, and I work out with xxxxx so I go over to their nursery now so again it's just very small nudges, it's small drips. I usually take an activity that they wouldn't normally perhaps have had in their setting and it's just letting them see how it works and how they can do it and it's enriching and it's kind of

It's kind of modelling

Yeah, all the time.

Do you... how about in your – as an Early Years Teacher which is what you are now, so that's what I'll call you, do you see a career progression for you here? What's your career progression?

I don't see one. I really don't think there is one.

Would there be one if you were a hundred yards across there in the school?

No. Well if I was in a school environment I would never go on to be deputy head or head teacher

So it's about you rather than the opportunity?

No, I would like there to be a career opportunity for me. I'd like to be able to utilise everything that I've, everything that I've learnt. Advising I suppose.

Advising who?

Other practitioners out in the field really. Or lecturing [laughs] . You know because I want to make a difference to people that, I want you know...

It's interesting because you know one of the things with New Leaders... many of our New Leaders had gone into lecturing and they've said to us why are they still not out in practice? And some of the things they've said has been because there's no career progression.

No, it's quite difficult. It's quite difficult.

Excerpt Research Notes Date

Arrived at CC. Nowhere to park in the Centre so I parked in a large empty car park outside the school on same site. Just ringing bell on the CC when a member of staff rushed out and asked me to move my car as the Head would 'go mad' if I parked there. Ended up parking on the road. Strange as they both share a site and a very large car park.